

Birds of a Feather by BuzzyBusyBee

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Summary: Summer of 1985 was it. Wren Buckley's last summer before her senior year begins.. you'd think that being Robin's unidentical twin sister would make her life in Hawkins just a little more interesting but that didn't begin until she started her summer job at the public pool. Besides loud kids and sunburns, she's gonna have to start dealing with Billy Hargrove, too..

1. Ch 1 - The Hargrove Happening

Note I: yes, this story is a romance, but i also wanted to incorporate the humor of Stranger Things that i love into this fic. the story starts off not so serious and will transition to really explain why Billy is the way that he is, not just because of his father.

Note II: I do not own any Stranger Things characters or the storyline. I am just a fan who enjoys the show and the characters enough to write a lengthy fic about it. I hope you enjoy!

o-o-o

The Buckley residence in 1985 was a humble one. Nothing too snazzy or loud, but it blended right in with all of the other typical houses in Hawkins, Indiana.

The house was painted light gray, two stories tall, and had three bedrooms.

Three bedrooms. One for the married couple known as Peggy and Arthur, the second was for their two daughters: Robin and Wren Buckley.

Robin was eldest, born only a few minutes before Wren.

The third bedroom was the guest bedroom, and the two daughters had bickered and begged for years to have their own rooms, but their parents never caved in.

So now they were seventeen and sharing a room together, even though they had a perfect room to spare.

No privacy, no boyfriends *or* girlfriends, and definitely no quiet.

"Robin, holy shit. How long do you have to practice?" Wren groaned as she stepped out of their bathroom, her feet dragging on the carpeted floor of their bedroom.

Robin was blasting the Hawkins' High fight song,.. incessantly.

Robin did not stop, and Wren seriously couldn't tell by this point if her sister was doing this on purpose or because she actually needed to practice.

The noise from the trumpet stopped for a few seconds, and Robin's carefree laugh filled Wren's ears.

It was *too* carefree.

It kinda pissed Wren off.

"Don't act like I haven't had to listen to you blast Wang Chung on the radio for hours on end. If I have to listen to "Dance Hall Days" one more time, I might explode." Robin remarked, relaxing some in the desk chair that she was sitting in.

Wren stopped herself from rolling her eyes as she reached for her bright red lifeguard bathing suit that she had bought a few days ago, just hours after she found out at her interview that she had been hired for the job.

She wasn't huge on public pools.. she actually found them disgusting, but being CPR certified since she was thirteen proved to work out in her favor, especially if it meant that she could earn \$3.35 an hour for it.

"Hey, don't bash Wang Chung. You like them, too." Wren mumbled, stuffing the bathing suit in her backpack and zipping it up.

She already felt overwhelmed thinking about her job.

The pool had been opened for a couple of weeks now, so things were in full swing at the pool and she wasn't really sure what to expect from it.

She already went through the how-tos and what-nots with her new boss, but she had never worked before. She also knew that all of her co-workers were probably going to be around her age, and that terrified her.

It wasn't that Wren had no friends, but she wasn't popular.

Even though she lived in a small town like Hawkins, there were a lot of people who only knew about her because of her and her sister being twins. They weren't even identical, so some people probably didn't even know that they were twins.

Wren spent her whole life kinda doing her own thing, even if it meant being different from Robin.

Wren was on the track team, while Robin played soccer. She was in choir, while Robin was in band practically her whole life.

They were both fluent in Spanish, but Robin was honestly a genius and knew how to speak French and Italian, too.

Her entire life, Wren felt like she couldn't keep up with Robin.

They were both smart and super sarcastic about literally anything, but they were a pair.

Robin and Wren. Wren and Robin. Sisters. Twins (but they AREN'T identical!).

"What even compelled you to take this job, anyways? You hate public pools, and Starcourt mall is opening soon. There's gonna be a ton of places accepting applications." Robin retorted while she spun around in the wooden chair, stopping after a few go-arounds.

Wren bit the inside of her cheek as she pulled the straps of her backpack over her shoulder.

Wren has heard all about the Starcourt mall.. everyone has. It's all that Hawkins has been buzzing about since the year started.

The building construction has been done since early March, and now it was the middle of May. Tons of clothing shops and food places will be opening, and a lot of kids at the high school are talking about summer jobs.

There's definitely upsides to working there: employee discounts, plenty of hot dates to snag, and best of all.. air conditioning.

Truthfully, the main reason why Wren was so adamant on this lifeguard job was for the fact that she wouldn't have to work with her sister.

She didn't hate Robin. Robin was basically her best friend.. but Wren wanted to be- needed to be-, her own person.

"Not really sure. I wanted to try something new." Wren finally stated after a few seconds of silence, pulling on a pair of flip-flops.

"Ah.. Sure. Well, have fun saving the lives of drowning children. You're gonna be a hero to Hawkins someday." Robin joked as Wren made her way out of their room.

Wren couldn't stop herself from letting out a little laugh as she made her way down the stairs, but the laugh faded into a look of exasperation as the trumpet blasting skillfully through the thin walls of their house almost immediately began again.

She may be terrified of this new job, but at least she could get away from fight song hell for a couple of shifts this summer.

o-o-o-o-o

Wren heaved out a deep breath as she took out the key to her parents' red 1980 Volkswagon Gol, her blue eyes wandering ahead of her to stare at the large sign that read "HAWKINS COMMUNITY POOL".

"C'mon Wren. It's no biggie, you'll be fine." The girl muttered to herself, grabbing her bag and stepping out of the car.

She locked it and stuffed the keys in the back zipper of her bag.

She began walking toward the entrance, pushing away her pesky blonde bangs that fell in front of her eyes.

It was Saturday, almost eleven. The pool opened at twelve p.m. and closed at seven so she would be here all day.

There were already a few cars in the parking lot but she hadn't gotten a good look at them or anything.

She was too nervous to care.

She walked into the entrance, glancing around at first and not seeing anybody for several seconds. Then she heard a few muffled voices coming from where the pool actually was so she walked a bit further.

"Hey, Wren!" A female voice called out and a look of confusion spread across Wren's features for a split second before she realized that Heather Holloway was calling for her.

Heather was a popular but nice girl that was in Wren's grade. They never actually talked but Heather was polite enough to everybody and wasn't known as somebody who was mean.

"You're a little early. Not everyone is here yet, but I can show you around! Eric asked me to show you the ropes, but don't worry, it's super easy." Heather smiled and began to walk around and talk to Wren about all of the protocols and rules.

Wren noticed that Heather hadn't changed yet, and was in a striped tank top and high waisted shorts.

She made Wren feel like a shapeless mop in comparison to her old choir tee and a pair of track shorts that she was wearing.

"Oh and this goes without saying, but make sure that no one ever brings any kind of food into the pool. Seriously, you'd be surprised how many people drop chili cheese dogs or chips in there. Trust me girl, you really don't wanna be the one to clean that up." She finished after about fifteen minutes of rule explaining and tips.

Wren's expression was a dead giveaway to how she felt about the image of having to clean it up.

Heather's snicker turned into a laugh, and she playfully nudged Wren.

"I'm not kidding. But don't worry, you've got this. I can tell you're kinda nervous." Heather smiled.

The sun was really starting to get hot and Wren couldn't tell if the sudden rush of warmth was from the sun or from her nerves.

"Sheesh, it's that obvious?" Wren grinned sheepishly and Heather nodded before she motioned Wren to follow her again, this time leading her into the locker room that has the girl's symbol over it.

"You've probably been here before so you know that this is where we change, but you can change in here. We have to get here at eleven but we don't have to change until eleven thirty." Heather stated before she went over to a locker.

"This is your locker. You can just cram your stuff in here when you're ready to start your shift. Here's the combo for it." Heather handed Wren a slip of paper before she turned and walked over to a locker a few away from hers.

Wren hadn't noticed until after she opened her locker that her new coworker was *undressing*.

Her eyes widened a bit and she hastily unzipped her bag, pulling out her bathing suit.

"Uh, Heather.. do you guys have like-..?" Wren trailed, awkwardly refusing to look to the side.

"Showers are in the back. Just take a left." Heather interrupted, already pulling up the red bathing suit onto her body and no longer naked.

Jesus fucking Christ..

Wren quickly shuffled to the showers, pulling the curtain shut once she stepped inside and began changing.

Wren wasn't like.. weird about seeing people naked.

...Well, she was. She barely even knew Heather so obviously the whole situation was just uncomfortable for her.

"Hey, when you're done meet me out front!" Heather called and Wren just said "gotcha" in reply.

After a few minutes Wren was changed.

She walked over to her bag again, taking out a random scrunchie so that she could pull her hair up and also a pair of sunglasses just in case she would need them.

Eric suggested that she bring some because the sun can be unbearable when you've been sitting in it for a little while.

She shoved her bag into her locker and eyed the locker combo for several seconds so that she could remember the numbers for later.

She put the slip of paper into the locker and closed it.

Wren took in a few deep breaths, letting herself relax and clear her head before she walked out of the locker room.

Immediately she could hear the chatter of a few people around her and she looked over at the clock and saw that it was eleven thirty-five. Already almost time to start..

"Wren!" Heather called and Wren looked over in the direction of the lifeguard's chair.

She began tying her hair up as she walked over to Heather who was leaning her shoulder against the tall white chair.

"We're gonna watch the kiddie pool for the first hour, and we can change when-... Billy, you're so late! Eric is going to chew us out *again* if he finds out!" Heather practically whined.

Wren could've sworn that she felt her heart drop down to the deep end of the pool, turning a bit so that she could look in the same direction that Heather was looking.

Surely not..

"Holloway, chill the fuck out. Eric won't find out shit.." The boy huffed out gruffly.

Billy Hargrove.

Wren was sorta shocked that Heather didn't get offended by his harsh reply but it dawned on her that she was probably used to him acting

that way.

Would Wren have to get used to it, too?

Was the feeling washing over her a feeling of existential dread or pure terror knowing that she was going to have to work with Billy Hargrove of all people?

"Who's the new chick?" Wren felt Billy eye her after asking that, suddenly feeling much more insecure of the swimsuit she was wearing even if it was just a one piece.

She looked at him, noticing that his eyes weren't necessarily conveying any emotion.

She felt.. weird under his gaze.

Ugh, where to start? Billy... he moved here in '84, and the whole town was aware of it.

They whispered -not so quietly- about the Hargrove-Mayfield family moving here for weeks.

The high school basically went into code red whenever people realized that there was a new senior at the school and a hot one at that.

The boy was insanely attractive and undoubtedly out of fucking control.

Dirty blonde hair that was cut into a curly mullet, striking blue eyes that were just downright tough and a body that sported some impressive abs.

He was immodest about it, she saw him in gym or on the track without a shirt on all of the time.

He was a party animal and apparently the "keg king".

The nickname was just as bogus of his ego when he's in that stupid blue Camaro that he revs around in all of the time, a girl usually accompanying him.

He could be such a dumbass. For example, him and his dingus friends were riding around late one night knocking over mailboxes in her neighborhood with baseball bats or whatever they were using to vandalize them.

Her dad talked about how he would've flipped out if they messed theirs up for weeks and he still sometimes mentions it. The story gets old.

"Wren Buckley, she started today. One of the new hires. She goes to Hawkins with us." Heather explained and the boy seemed indifferent.

"Never heard of her. Must be a nobody." Billy remarked, a boyish grin on his face as he looked at the two girls. *What a dipshit.*

"Man, I'm just kidding. Billy Hargrove. I've seen you around before." He added and Heather let out a relieved laugh before she pushed him a little on the shoulder.

He didn't seem to mind the contact, sending Heather a playful wink.

"See ya Heather..." Billy replied smoothly, and Wren didn't notice what she was doing but she was practically glaring at him.

He caught the bitter vibe and took a few seconds to look at her. Wren almost took his stare as a challenge.

It didn't take an idiot to notice the aggressive vibe she was giving off.. well, Heather didn't notice.

Billy did. And he didn't like it.

Some unreadable, smug look was resting on his features and he didn't do anything for a few long seconds before he lazily drew out, "..Buckley."

Billy sent a casual nod in Wren's direction before he turned around and headed toward the men's locker room.

"Hey you're watching over the pool first!" Heather shouted as he coolly walked off to which he lifted his hand with his pointer finger out, motioning as if to say "I heard you".

"Sheesh. I didn't know he worked here.." Wren muttered as her and Heather walked over near the kiddie pool.

She mindlessly kicked at a few rocks on the pavement as they made their way over.

"Billy? Oh. Yeah. He's pretty cool, right?"

"Hargrove is kind of a dick." Wren casually stated and Heather giggled.

"Yeah, he can be. But he's really not that bad when he's not around all the other people from school. And you learn that he's not mean, that's just how he is.." Heather trailed as the two got to the pool the change of tone in her voice giving her away.

Wren could tell that Heather wanted her to ask about whatever it was that happened between Heather and Billy.

What the heck, sure. She'll bite.

"He like.." She hesitated with her wording. "Has he flirted with you?" Wren asked.

Oh yeah, she knew all about his adventures. Well, she heard the rumors.

Everyone talked about who everyone was with here.

It wasn't that Wren cared but it's impossible not to hear what everyone else is talking about at Hawkins High.

Heather shrugged, pulling her dark brown hair into a neat ponytail.

"For sure. But like it's not a big deal or anything because it's just Billy. He asked me out when we first started working together but my dad would literally kill me if he heard that Billy Hargrove asked me out." She laughed and Wren nervously chuckled.

"Plus I'm not really into him like that anyways. Billy only wants one thing from girls, yanno?"

"Yeah, I know what you mean. I uh— actually *I* don't,.. know. but I do." Wren stuttered.

Thankfully their conversation was short-lived whenever people began to walk in and Wren no longer had the time to worry about whether or not Billy Hargrove would try to speak to her again.

It was weird to her, she couldn't imagine Billy being a nice guy or even a decent one at that but Heather didn't seem to mind him.

It made it easier for Wren to look forward to her job this summer.

Maybe he wouldn't completely ruin it like she thought he would.

That day after her first shift had ended, she realized that she wouldn't forget to wear sunscreen when she was on lifeguard duty ever again.

2. Ch 2 - Invitation

The past couple of days after Wren's first day of work flew by fast.

She had her first shift on Saturday and didn't have to work on Sunday because the pool was closed that day.

Now her next obstacle was facing her: it was the last week of school before summer break started.

She could practically taste her Junior year coming to an end and all of the slushies and cookout food that came along with summertime already.

It was Wednesday and she was in math.

Eyeing the clock, dying for the period to end so that lunch would begin.

She didn't like math. She wasn't terrible at it though and didn't really struggle with it.

She just didn't like it.

Her eyes were glazed over, staring at the board while the middle-aged teacher lectured about.

Her thoughts began to wonder back to work.

She worked Saturday and Monday. She was off yesterday but this evening she was scheduled to work again.

Heather was nice and all but she was honestly a little much for Wren.

Wren didn't like the idea of being stuck in Hawkins all of her life but Heather was the type of hometown girl that didn't see herself leaving the convenience of her parents.

Wren didn't judge her for it; she just couldn't picture it for herself.

Hawkins was a bit of a shit hole. Nothing ever happened here.

Actually, the past year has been different.

Barbara Holland went missing in '84 which shook everybody up. She.. disappeared one day.

It bothered Wren. The two were friends.

There were a couple of evenings where Wren felt like Barbara's disappearance was too much for her to think about.

Will Byers was found in the woods which is totally weird.

He had gotten lost for awhile and his mom went berserk. She became the local crazy lady for a minute there.

Okay.. maybe things did happen in Hawkins. Not *good* things, but things.

Speaking of not good things happening, Wren's situation at work hadn't really gone anywhere.

Billy didn't work on Tuesday but Heather did and Wren found it pretty enjoyable.

Heather and Wren weren't super compatible but Heather was fun to work with. Her chatty nature made the time go by quickly.

Wren hadn't really gotten on to a lot of people yet about breaking the pool rules.

Both days she had to whistle for people to stop horse playing.

Most of the time the kids weren't even the ones she had to give warnings to, it was the damn adults.

Wren would stop them with a simple whistle blow and a "Hey, look at the rules, doofus!" while pointing to the "POOL RULES" sign.

Heather would straighten up her posture and shrilly shout "That isn't allowed, someone can get hurt!"

Billy would obnoxiously blow that stupid whistle of his for several

seconds until the entire pool stopped what they were doing to look at him, waiting to see what he had to say to the unlucky victim.

He would say something like "Ass hat! If you bash your head on the bottom of the pool, guess who's going to say "I told you so"? That's your last damn warning!"

Aggressive but effective.

At first Wren wondered how the hell he hadn't gotten fired yet but their boss Eric didn't really care how they got people to follow the rules just as long as they listened one way or another.

Billy hadn't tried talking to Wren again which really relieved her.

She didn't know Billy but she knew him well enough.

She decided he wasn't that great of a person almost as soon as he moved here.

He was a teenage boy that had a massive superiority complex.

The worst thing that could happen to him at this point in his life is his car getting a scratch on it.

He addressed girls as chicks which literally makes her want to gag. How pretentious is that?

Wren blinked a few times once she realized that the dismissal bell rang, taking in a sharp breath and quickly putting away her things.

Math class. The best time of the day to think about basically everything else in the world except for what was being written on the chalkboard.

o-o-o-o-o

The sun was in full-force this afternoon. Super hot, super humid and super annoying.

Luckily to Wren's advantage she got to work in it! Yay.

The teenager was lounging in the confines of the lifeguard seat, the small umbrella over her head providing a feasible amount of shade.

The water she had next to her from concession was not even cold anymore which made her not want it even if she were about to die from dehydration (maybe that's a little melodramatic).

She kept looking at the clock on the wall that was nearly straight across from her.

Where the hell was he?

It was already fifteen minutes past the hour that she was supposed to be up here and Billy was nowhere to be seen.

The pool was pretty packed. At least a hundred people decided to come swim today and things were hectic.

She was hot, sweaty and completely over sitting in this chair. Her ass was beginning to hurt.

Wren kept searching for her coworker but could not see him anywhere.

It had been a couple of minutes of searching before she saw him walk out of the men's changing room.

Hair freshly fixed, a toothpick resting between his teeth and a devilish glint in his eyes.

She was too busy glaring daggers at him to even notice the rapid spike of estrogen that was suddenly in the air.

All of the women stared and even some men.

He paid a particular amount of attention to the moms that were always sunbathing.. they reveled when they were noticed by him.

The boy walked- no, he *sauntered* over to the lifeguard's seat, a calm and collected expression on his features.

Wren straightened up, looking down at him distastefully.

"Where the hell were you?" She hissed and he laughed at her. He just laughed.

There was an awkward pause between the two of them. Well, it was awkward for Wren anyways. So she spoke again.

"You're fifteen minutes late. You have one job. *One job*. And that is to cover for me."

"Damn, calm down. The hair doesn't fix itself."

"..are you joking? Please tell me you're joking." Wren questioned and the boy took the toothpick from his mouth, moistening his lips with his tongue.

He leaned against the bars of the tall frame of the chair, looking up to Wren. He was getting annoyed.

Join the club, dickhead.

"I'm not. Are you going to get down or not?" He impatiently prodded. "Because if you want me out of your hair, I'd be happy to leave. Mrs. Wheeler has been eyeing me this whole afternoon.."

Just like that, any ounce of charm that he might've had while walking over here was gone.

"Ugh, barf. Emphasis on the *Mrs.* She's married." Wren muttered, taking off her sunglasses and putting her flip-flops back on before she began to stand up.

"Nice tan you've got going on there. You're almost as red as my trunks." Billy remarked, a boyish smirk on his face as his eyes focused intently on the group of moms in their chairs.

Wren rolled her eyes as she climbed down from the short ladder, "Thanks, Captain Obvious. I forgot sunscreen the first day."

Her words were bitter. And pretty pathetic.

"What kinda name is Wren, anyways?"

"What?" She asked.

Billy climbed up the ladder, sitting down with a quiet grunt before he made himself comfortable, man-spreading carelessly.

"Sounds like a name a grandma would have. Do your parents hate you or somethin'?" Billy questioned, eyes scanning briefly over the pool of people.

Wren snorted. "Actually, yeah they must hate us a little bit. They're big into nature docs. They named me and my sister after birds. Who does that?"

"You've got a sister? Is she hot?"

"I'm actually going to push you into this pool someday. And uh- no? I mean I don't know. We're twins."

"Oh shit, then she looks like you? Nevermind." Billy cackled.

Is it possible to hate somebody after only having a conversation and a half with them?

"Eat my shorts, dipstick. We're not identical." She took a hearty swig from her water while looking across the pool and eyeing the people swimming.

They seem to be having fun. She wished she could relate.

"Don't be late again. If you are, you'll regret it." Wren warned, not realizing that the phrase sounded lowkey threatening until after the words came out from her mouth.

"Damn, is that right? Bite me, Buckley." Billy fiddled with the toothpick in his mouth, his expression not changing even slightly.

His words were riddled with the smallest hint of challenge and seduction, but for the most part she took his shitty attitude as indifference.

Wren scoffed quietly to herself in disbelief.

"I'm going on break. I have a headache." She muttered as she began walking away.

Wren shortly forgot about Billy by the time she made her way to the shade of the concession stand.

Conveniently her headache also became nonexistent once her conversation with Billy had ended.

O-O-O-O-O

Wren's shift had finally ended and she was now changed into her trusty black track shorts and a white cropped t-shirt.

Her backpack was slung over her right shoulder and she was twirling her keys around her index finger as she walked out to her car.

She said a quick goodbye to Eric as he locked up the gates to the pool.

Not gonna lie, she was super happy that her shift was over.

It was a long day even if the hours were short because she had school today.

The peak of her shift was definitely the cherry slushie that she had while she was on break.

Kinda sad but ugh. *So delicious.*

Wren had managed to unlock the door to her car and open it when she heard a car pull up behind hers.

"Wren! Listen my parents are gonna be gone this weekend for an anniversary trip and I'm throwing a party. I really want you to come!" Heather's high-pitched voice carried easily through the rolled-down window of the passenger side of her vehicle.

Wren internally cringed at the idea of going to a high school party.

"Oh uh- A party?"

"Yeah it'll be mega fun! Lots of hot guys are going to be there and Leann's boyfriend has this killer sound system that he's gonna bring. It's an end of the year summer bash, everyone's going to be there."

"Everyone? Geez Heather, I don't know.." Wren trailed unsurely.

"Aww c'mon Wren. Please just think about it? Pleeese?" Heather egged on and Wren just sent her sorta friend a sheepish smile.

"Alright- fine. I'll think about it, okay? But I don't know yet."

"Yay! I'll see ya tomorrow!" Heather grinned, waving frantically at Wren before she drove off.

Wren scrambled into her car, huffing out a long breath as she sat and gazed out of the windshield for several long seconds.

It wasn't that Wren hadn't ever hung out with people before.

She just hasn't ever been to a party.

Or even invited to one. Not a real one, anyways.

This party would probably have lots of people, lots of noise and lots of alcohol.

To the average teenager that was heaven, but to Wren.. it made her really nervous.

She was flattered that Heather wanted her to be around but she knew that going to that party was going to be very unlikely.

Robin was probably going to want to hang out or something..

If Robin didn't want to do anything then Wren knew that there was no way, no *friggin'* way that her parents would ever let her stay out late on a Saturday night to go to a party.

o-o-o-o-o

"Oh honey, *of course* you can go to a party on Saturday. Arthur, did you hear that? Our girl got invited to her first party!" Peggy swooned.

"Mom.. it's really not that big of a deal.." Wren flushed, swirling spaghetti around her fork and trying to ignore her sister's laughter right beside of her.

"Oh my God. A party? You have to be kidding me." Robin remarked with a mouthful of garlic bread.

"I'm not. Heather Holloway invited me." Wren explained just before taking a monstrous bite of spaghetti.

"The Holloways are a good family! Are you two friends?" Her mom asked and Wren shrugged as she gulped down a few drinks of water.

Robin snorted at the possibility of her sister actually becoming friends with people like Heather.

Robin knew that people like Heather didn't really talk to the band geeks or the choir kids. Or people with actual personalities.

"I guess. Well, not really friends. We work together and she's really nice." Wren admitted, noticing the skeptical look on her sister's face. "What?"

"Nothing. It's sort of funny to me that you're willing to be around a bunch of hair-obsessed dweebs. Is this actually something you wanna do?" Robin asked, staring directly at her sister.

"I mean.. at first I said no. But she asked me to think about it, and I have. Maybe it won't be that bad." Wren quietly stated, swirling spaghetti again.

"Birdie," Her mom began, a nickname that she had coined for her daughters through the years. "Think of this as a good thing. You can make some new friends. This is your last summer in high school, make the best of it!"

"Ugh. Are you even our mother? I can't believe you're encouraging this." Robin groaned before she sighed and shrugged her shoulders. "Whatever. Don't say I didn't tell you so."

3. Ch 3 - Confrontations

Wren was sipping on her fresh-out-of-the fridge bottled water, relishing in the chilliness of the drink.

She had already gotten significantly tan since starting this job no thanks to that sunburn she was still recovering from.

Now it had faded into her pale skin and the area over her nose and upper cheeks were the only giveaway of her rookie mistake.

They were tinged with pink and she had even formed a few sun freckles.

She was sitting on the edge of the pool, her feet dipped into the water.

This shift was pretty hectic today since it was Saturday.

They had a hearty attendance of over a hundred people.

It was six now and people were beginning to leave since it closed at seven.

She couldn't lie, she wasn't sure if she was excited for this shift to end or dreading it since Heather would be expecting an answer soon.

She had taken to watching a mom play in the pool with her toddler, an absent-minded smile on her face.

Her family used to come here sometimes when she was little and it was always a lot of fun.

Her dad always made sure to buy her and Robin slushies.

It was one of the few things she could remember about swimming here.

Maybe that's one reason why she likes them so much now.

She broke her attention away from the two and her eyes narrowed

toward the lifeguard seat.

Billy was sitting there, slouched per use. But there was something different about the expression on his face than what she was used to.

He seemed genuinely thoughtful and his eyes were zeroed in on something.

Her blue eyes narrowed in the direction of his own and a confused frown formed over her face.

The frown faded into a softer look, one of wonder as she realized what it was that he was paying so much attention to.

Billy was watching the mom and her kid, too.

It was a little boy with brown hair and a wide grin and such bright eyes.

The pair were alive and happy.

Embracing the simplicity of one another and enjoying the moment.

The boy couldn't have been any older than three or four.

She didn't look at them for very long.

Instead she had taken to looking at Billy again but the older boy had already beat her to it.

Her feet that had been swishing back in forth in the water eventually came to a complete halt.

They just looked at each other for a few seconds.

That wondrous look on her face remained.

She couldn't help but wonder if Billy was okay for some reason.

When he was watching them he had this unreadable expression on his face that she hadn't seen on him before.

He was usually so steadfast, so forward and truthful with his moods.

This time... she wasn't so sure.

Wren felt her cheeks heat up whenever neither of them had looked away from one another, now starting to get embarrassed from the fact that she had been caught watching him.

His right brow perked up questioningly from the distance between them.

She could practically hear his words already: "Take a picture doll, it'll last longer."

She could see his brow raise even from the fifty or so feet that separated the two of them.

That indecipherable look on his face was gone almost as quick as it had appeared and he now had a charming grin on his dingus face.

He lifted his hand at her, his index and middle finger lifted up and pressed together while the others were against his palm.

He had casually lifted it to wave at her and was grinning over the fact that he had caught her staring.

Billy was giving her that look that he gave every other girl on this planet.

Nice to know that Billy's back to normal again...

She wasn't really used to that from him.

The heat on her face grew even warmer.

Gross.

She stopped herself from rolling her eyes and instead closed the lid to her water and began to stand up.

The girl wasn't watching Billy Hargrove anymore and he was long gone from her field of attention once she had picked her legs up from the water and walked over toward the kiddie pool.

But he watched her as she walked further away, temporarily forgetting about any memories of his that he was previously dealing with and admiring the way her bright swimsuit clung to her skin and showed off her ass.

Yup, Billy Hargrove was *definitely back* to normal.

o-o-o

Wren had just walked out of the changing room and back outside.

There was light chatter surrounding her; a few of her coworkers were talking to each other, one of them being Heather.

Wren took her bottom lip between her teeth as she stood there for a moment before she pulled her backpack strap further onto her shoulder, securing it and then walking over to the two girls.

Heather immediately noticed Wren, a curious look on her face.

"Hey! Did you ever get the clear to come over and party tonight?" The Holloway girl asked, wiggling her brows.

Wren sent her a smile but before she could answer..

"I'm gonna head out to the car, I'll wait up for you Heather! " Their coworker Kelly said, waving goodbye to Wren before she walked off.

Wren took this as an opportunity to decide on what she wanted to say.

To party, or not to party: that is the question.

"Sorry, I rode with her today so I've gotta split... soooo?" Heather prodded, lightly nudging Wren for an answer.

Hmm, why the hell not?

This last high school summer is about making memories, isn't it?

"Yeah, I did actually!"

"Oh my God!" Heather exclaimed while putting her hands on Wren's

shoulders and lightly shaking them, making Wren laugh nervously at the contact.

"I knew you had it in you to come to a party!"

"A party? Buckley, you don't strike me as the party type." A deep voice rung smoothly from behind her.

The two girls looked at Billy.

The boy's hair was damp but it had mostly dried as he had showered to rinse off the sweat and sun from today's shift.

He was wearing a white tank which boasted his muscular frame and tanned skin and some light blue jeans with rips in them.

His shoes were a pair of stark white nikes and he had a dog tag necklace around his throat.

"I'm not. Heather invited me and I said yes. It sounds like fun." Wren simply responded, prying her eyes away from him and sending Heather a smile.

He was stupidly attractive.

Wren didn't associate Billy to be her type so it wasn't as if she was looking for a reason to give him a bigger head than he already has.

It was just an observation that she had made.

The widespread knowledge from the rest of the female population that Billy Hargrove was in fact hot made her not want to admit that even more.

Billy parted his lips to speak but a car honked instead.

"Heather, c'mon! We have to get ready for tonight!" Kelly urged and Heather laughed.

"Fine, fine!" She shouted before she looked to Wren and Billy. "Sorry guys, gotta run. Here's my address, Wren. Super easy to find. See ya later!" She responded, cutting the conversation short and running off

after she gave Wren a small piece of paper with the written address.

There was a quiet moment between the two, the only noise being the car door shutting and zooming off.

Wren rocked on the balls of her feet for a few seconds before she spoke.

"Soo.. are you like.. going to the party, too?" Wren asked and Billy sent her a knowing look.

No words, just that look.

"Uhh.. what?" Wren snapped, not enjoying the fact that she didn't feel in control of the conversation.

"Cool it. Just messin' around. And no. I have a hot ass date waiting for me tonight with a college chick.. so if you don't mind.." He began to walk toward the parking lot.

"Oh wow, you really are living the American dream, aren't you Billy?" Wren unenthusiastically remarked, following suit at her own pace.

"What's wrong, Buckley? Are you sad that you don't have a hot date tonight?" His voice spoke smoothly.

He pulled out a pack of cigarettes and a zipo, pulling one out and lighting it in a skillfully quick fashion.

Of course he smokes.

She snorted at his question, simply replying with "no".

"Ohh okay." He nodded knowingly, his expression not visible to her until he turned around and started to walk backwards.

"So.. you're sad that you don't have a hot date with the Keg King of Hawkins, Indiana, yeah?" He questioned, the reply breathing out smoke from his first puff of the cigarette.

The words were playful but also.. serious?

"Oh my God, a hot date with Billy Hargrove? I— did you guys hear that?" Wren looked around at the nonexistent people around them, feigning shock.

She lifted her hand to her chest, as if she were covering her heart to recover from the shock.

She had stopped walking, and so did he. They were standing in the middle of the parking lot.

"You mean, *the* Billy Hargrove? The out-of-state doofus who thinks he's hot shit because he flirts with moms and drives around in his muscle car like he isn't about to blow the engine out at any given goddamn second? Oh geez... I don't even know what to think anymore! Is this real life..?" She shot at him, before she broke character.

"Ugh. Gag me with a spoon. Get over yourself." Wren finished.

Billy walked up to her angrily, looking down to her.

He was so quick and aggressive about it that it made her take a step away from him.

She was several inches shorter than him so it was easy for her to feel a little overwhelmed at his sudden closeness.

She could feel the heat from his body radiating onto her.

He removed the cigarette from between his lips.

"You're talkin' about me like I'm the only one who puts on an act around here. What about you, doll?" Billy coolly replied, his icy gaze staring down at her.

"W-What?" She stuttered for a moment, confusion littered across her face.

Billy took another hit from his cigarette, his lips barely moving and exhaling the smoke away from her face.

His eyes wandered over the expression she held before a chuckle

slipped from his lips.

He had this strange, wild look in his eyes.

It was unpredictable.

Billy was unpredictable.

Billy's head tilted toward the side, staring down at her like a hawk would toward its prey just before it went in for the kill.

"You act like hot shit, too. Prancing around and being judgy as fuck while you think you're invisible to everybody else. You ever stop to think about the fact that you're not see through even when you try to be, princess?"

Wren felt like she had been lit on fire.

No one had ever said anything like that to her before.

What the fuck was that even supposed to mean?

"You.. you literally make zero sense. I'm leaving." Wren mumbles, looking down and beginning to scramble for her keys from her pocket.

"You also have a killer staring problem. Has anyone ever told you that or do you just like staring at people like a goddamn psycho?" Billy remarked, adding to the fire of his ammunition before breathing cigarette smoke harshly into her face, a wild grin breaking across his cheeks.

She stared up at him, clearly upset and disgusted with his actions.

How could he be so happy after saying something like that to her?

She had gotten riled up.

It was just what he wanted.

"Whatever, Billy. see you whenever.. or not. I don't know or care. don't talk to me." The girl muttered, walking past him quickly and

into the safety of her vehicle.

He was so hot and cold.

When he first approached her, she thought that maybe the two could actually have a decent conversation for once.

Clearly she was wrong.

He had to start being a cocky asshole and that really set her off.

Is he incapable of not talking about himself every time he opens his mouth?

Is he incapable of taking no for an answer?

Is Billy incapable of being a decent human being for once in his life?

O-O-O

"Not going..." Robin makes a spin in the desk chair.

"Please?"

"Still not going." She says while spinning again.

"Pretty please?"

"Hey, doofus. Listen to me, loud and clear. NO."

Wren eyed herself through the mirror hanging up on the wall in her bedroom, finishing up with pulling her curled dirty blonde hair into a high pony.

Her bangs were split so that they were flowing along the sides of her face, framing her freckled cheeks nicely.

She was trying to convince Robin to go to the party with her tonight.

Wren was kinda terrified and she didn't want to go alone.

"..How do I look?" Wren finally asked, turning and facing her sister.

She had chosen to wear blue high-waisted shorts with a yellow and white striped belt alongside a bright yellow button up to match.

She left the top two unbuttoned, just for a little bit of spontaneity.

Her shoes were white tennis shoes, comfy and in style and they were complimented with crew socks.

Robin eyed her twin, raising her eyebrows.

"Yanno what? Really nice, actually. I like what you've got going on with the... okay okay wait no listen," Robin stopped mid-sentence, derailing the topic of conversation and traveling full-steam ahead into another.

Robin stood and grabbed her sister's hands, looking straight into her eyes with full seriousness.

"Are you sure you want to do this? Because we can totally do something else that would be just as fun minus all of the jocks and airheads. Maybe go to a place where you won't suffocate from the intense use of aerosol hairspray?"

"Robin.. I'm sure."

"Dammit, I was hoping that would change your mind. Alright... well.. I guess I'm going with you, then."

4. Ch4 - Big Fun

"Dude I can't believe that we're actually doing this.." Robin muttered as the two sisters stared out of the windshield of their parents' car.

Wren felt like she couldn't move, her nerves were really starting to get the best of her.

"Yup.."

"Is it uh.. too late to turn back now?" Robin asked, voice soft as she watched the teenagers lingering in and out of Heather's house.

"Yup.." Wren repeated and Robin sucked in air through her teeth as she nodded knowingly.

"Okay yeah. Yeah- you're totally right. Let's just fucking go for it." Robin stated before she unlocked the passenger door and began to step out.

Wren blinked a few times before she realized Robin was leaving her.

She quickly took the keys from the ignition and stepped out from the car, locking it after she closed it.

"Obsession" by Animotion was blasting from the house.

"Wow.. Heather wasn't kidding when she said she was borrowing a killer sound system from somebody." Wren stated, laughter lacing her words.

Her and Robin walked up to the sidewalk of the house, lingering closely to one another.

Robin had opted for a more comfortable outfit which wasn't surprising.

Wren's sister always opted for flexibility in her outfits instead of wearing something that was out of her comfort zone.

She was wearing a simple white cropped tee with thin red stripes on

it, a pair of darker washed high waisted jeans and classic black high top converse.

She didn't bother fixing her hair, she kept it how she always wore it.

Robin didn't like these people anyways and was only here to make sure that her sister ended up back home okay.

A small part of Robin was also curious about what a high school party was like but she wouldn't ever admit that out loud...

Wren took the lead as they walked through the doors of the house which were already open.

It was pretty packed which was what she expected.

Wren stopped once her and Robin got near the stairs, taking a moment to look to her sister.

"So what now?" Wren's raised voice asked over the loud music and Robin shrugged.

"I dunno, I didn't think we would make it this far." Robin joked, a playful smile on her face.

The two shared a small moment of relieved laughter with one another.

Maybe the two young girls were being a little strange over this but they truly weren't used to this atmosphere.

Their parents named them after birds for Christ's sake.

They grew up in a household of nerds and the two reflected that sometimes.

They were proud of who they were despite never being popular in school.

The Buckley twins were happy to be fluent in different languages, to be involved with the arts and to have some true friends in their lives.

But make no mistake about it, they still felt the smallest desire to fit in even if the desire was minuscule.

"Let's get a drink." Wren suggested.

Robin sent her an unsure look but she nodded.

"Yeah, sure. But don't expect me to enjoy it."

The two girls wandered around for a few minutes before they could even find the kitchen but the giveaway of its location was the sheer loudness emitting from it.

The dining room that connected to the kitchen was the most congested area in the house.

A group of twenty or thirty people were congregated in the room while two small groups of people were at either end of the dining table, playing beer bong.

They were mostly seniors who just graduated, several of them wearing their letterman jackets.

Robin and Wren watched the group from the sides, their shoulders pressing against one another.

One of the boys bounced one of the ping-pong balls and it landed in one of the three remaining red solo cups and the people in the room suddenly erupted in cheer.

Wren felt Robin jump a little in shock from the yelling, a disbelieving laugh sounding from her sister.

"Holy shit, I feel like we're in a movie already!" Robin stated incredulously, words reeking in sarcasm.

"Tell me about it. I feel like I've been in a movie since I started my job at the pool." Wren remarked and Robin sent her a look.

"Oh yeah, your new pool job. Yanno you haven't really even talked to me a whole lot about that. What's the status on that, anyways?" Robin asked and Wren shrugged and began pushing past people to

get into the kitchen, ignoring the loudness of the teenagers playing beer pong and the blasting music.

"Uhh.. honestly it hasn't been that bad. Heather's been super helpful and nice about everything." Wren admitted as they approached the drinks.

"Kids are obnoxious but not as obnoxious as Billy Hargrove.." Wren stated, receiving a look of exasperation from her sister.

"Oh damn.. you're working with Billy Hargrove? Yikes.." Her sister trailed before they froze.

The two's eyes narrowed down to the drinks unknowingly, shocked with the variety of alcohol sprawled across the countertops.

Wren and Robin looked at each other unsurely and Wren shrugged as she made a bee-line for the beer.

She reached for two but Robin shook her head whenever Wren offered it to her.

"Uh actually I'm- I'm just gonna get some water.." Robin admitted, bending down to the open cooler and getting a bottle of water.

She cracked it open and took a long swig from it.

Wren could tell that Robin was definitely more nervous than she was now.

Wren wasn't so good at hiding her anxious tendencies but Robin was a master at it.

Wren just knew how to spot Robin's giveaways whenever she wasn't feeling right.

She put down the extra beer and opened her own can, taking a sip from it and wincing at the gross taste of it.

"Damn.. this is really gross Robin.." Wren mumbled, eyes narrowing as the cheers spiked again.

"Yeah I can imagine, it smells like piss." Robin laughed at her sister's chosen misfortune.

A group of girls walked over to the countertop of drinks and the two quickly shuffled out of the smaller-sized kitchen to get out of the way.

As much as Wren didn't like the taste of her drink, she continued taking small sips from it anyways.

It got a little better the more she forced herself to drink from it, the taste wasn't so much of a shock anymore.

"Angel" by Madonna was now on the stereo, echoing in her ears as Wren gently walked through the small waves of people, getting to the living room.

It was more laid back in here.

A small group of people were playing spin the bottle and Wren hadn't bothered to pay attention to who was playing and instead looked to her sister.

Robin seemed intent on the group though, nervously clutching onto the plastic bottle she was holding.

"What's up?" Wren asked curiously, wondering why the PDA was catching Robin's attention.

Robin nudged her sister a little harshly in the rib, eliciting a quiet "*shit, ouch Robin!*" but Robin shushed her.

"Tammy Thompson is over there.." Robin muttered as casually as she could to her sister, taking in a deep breath.

Wren looked around for a few seconds, not finding her at first but then seeing the girl that Robin had a crush on for the entirety of their junior year.

Tammy was a sweet girl by what Wren knew. They sang in choir together but never really talked.

Robin and Tammy started off as friends but over time.. Robin really fell for her.

They shared a morning class and of course Wren never heard the end of it.

She was average, a lot like the rest of Hawkins.

Calling people average wasn't supposed to be an insult, not to Wren anyways. She considered herself average.

Normal. A Hawkins native at heart.

It was a secret to their parents but Robin knew she was gay since they were in middle school.

Wren was the only person who actually knew about her sister's secret.

She tried to convince Robin to go for it but Robin knew better.

Robin really didn't think that Tammy was the type to ever like girls.. she idolized boys like Steve Harrington or Tommy H., even if him and Carol were on and off for as long as she could remember.

Tammy was spinning the bottle and it landed on some girl. The two sent each other a bashful look for a few seconds while the boys playing with them whooped, excited for the girl on girl action.

"Boys really are something, aren't they?" Wren uttered, eyeing the group of horny teenagers as she took a drink from her half-empty beer.

Robin stiffened and suddenly felt like she couldn't breathe as the two went in for the kiss.

The music suddenly was too loud for Robin and her hands were a sweaty mess.

She felt like her throat had closed up and she hated that she could feel tears welling up in her eyes.

Holy shit, she felt like she was going to fucking throw up.

"I.. I need some air.." Robin quickly rushed away, causing Wren to quickly look at her and watch her sister practically run to the back of the house.

"Robin! Wait.." Wren began, trying to follow suit but she lost track of her sister.

She looked around for a few seconds, receiving a few looks from both girls and guys who were wondering what she was even doing.

"Robin?" Wren asked, turning in a circle a few times and seeing the class screen doors that led outside.

Maybe she was out there.

Wren maneuvered her way through the groups of people before she walked through the doors and outside, the warm summer air hitting her.

Wow, it was almost as warm inside as it was out here.

Wren looked around for a little bit but she still couldn't spot Robin.

"Dammit Robin.. where did you go?" Wren sighed softly, beginning to walk further into the backyard.

It was nicely decorated, small rounded lights were hanging along the wooden fence outlining the entire layout of the backyard.

There was a decently sized swimming pool and people were swimming and jumping into it, having fun.

There were also two folding tables with a ton of snacks on them and Wren wondered just how much of a party budget Heather had to afford all of that alcohol *and* the food.

Wren seriously couldn't find her sister anywhere.

She quickly downed the rest of her drink, tossing it in the trash.

There was another speaker out here playing different music from what was inside of the house.

Wren had to admit, she felt a lot better out here than she did inside. It was more open and she felt like she could breathe and relax a little more.

"Wren! You're finally here. For a sec I thought that you ditched on coming over." Heather's voice rung from behind Wren who was still facing the garbage from when she threw away her beer can.

Wren turned around quickly, letting out a shaky laugh.

"Haha.. yeah.. no I've been here for a little bit." Wren admitted, sending her new friend a smile.

"You look so cute, I love your top. And your wearing makeup, it looks really good!" Heather complimented effortlessly and Wren couldn't lie.. it was really nice.

A smile formed its way onto her cheeks, "Thanks Heather."

"Hey I'm so over being the host, do you wanna drink a few shots with me? I'm tired of talking to boys." Heather giggled and Wren pursed her lips.

"Actually Heather- I can't, I'm looking for my sister.." Wren frowned and a concerned look flashed on Heather's face.

"Oh really? Is she okay?" She glanced around for a few moments before looking back to Wren. "What happened?"

Wren shook her head, "It's.. it's kind of personal and hard to explain." She admitted.

A look flashed in Heather's eyes, and she sent a smile to Wren.

"Listen I'm sure she's okay, she couldn't have gone far. We'll look for her in a few, I'll help you! Will you at least have one with me? It'll be super quick I promise, I just don't wanna drink alone." Heather urged, grabbing Wren's hand and guiding her inside, not giving her the opportunity to even answer.

Wren didn't know how to respond, so she didn't, she just frantically looked around for Robin as Heather guided her back toward the kitchen.

Please be okay, Robin..

"So I've been hiding this stuff away from everybody else." Heather sent a playful smirk to Wren, getting on her knees and opening one of the bottom cabinets and shuffling around before she pulled out a large clear bottle.

Heather stood back up, setting the bottle on the cabinet. Wren anxiously eyed it.

It was a new bottle of vanilla vodka.

She'd never had it before but based on the way Heather got excited, it was intended for the use of one thing and one thing only: to get fucked up.

Heather cracked open the bottle of clear liquid, grabbing two shot glasses from the counter and sliding them in front of them.

"Heather.. I'm really not sure about this." Wren nervously admitted as the girl poured them drinks, "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" annoyingly sounding off around them.

"C'mon, chick. It won't be too bad. If you didn't come here to have fun, then why are you here?" Heather challenged.

Wren stiffened a little bit, meeting eyes with her.

That was the first time Heather had ever said anything remotely assertive toward her and Wren realized that Heather *was* a popular girl. She did stuff like this all of the time. How could Wren forget that?

She was just hoping that maybe Heather was different.

"I'm serious, you'll be fine. A few drinks won't kill you, I promise." Heather remarked, sliding Wren one of the glasses and picking up her own.

She waited for Wren to do the same, sending her an urgent look when she hadn't at first.

Sorry, Robin.. don't hate me for this.

"Fine, what the hell.." Wren giggled softly, reaching for the vodka shot.

"To our *last* summer." Heather grinned excitably before she lifted it up and clinked it to Wren's glass.

Heather tilted her head back and downed the shot effortlessly.

Wren followed suit, not prepared for the harsh burning of the liquid as it made its way past her lips.

Holy shit that is fucking strong.

"Whew!" Heather exclaimed, pushing her perfectly curled hair from her face, wiggling her arms and body a little bit as her excitement heightened. "So, how was that girl?" Heather laughed, already pouring the two of them another.

"Actually.. it wasn't that bad." Wren bit at her lip, and Heather shot her a knowing look.

"See I told you!" Heather giddily exclaimed before she grabbed her glass again. "C'mon, let's have another!"

"Heather I-"

"Wren, this is *my* party. I invited you because you never go to these things," *ouch*.. "And I didn't plan on letting you mope around while you were here. Have another one with me, this is the good stuff." Heather urged.

The convincing deeply bothered Wren but the teenager was succumbing to the peer pressure just for the fact that she knew Heather was going to keep pushing against the tide to get Wren to join in with her.

The manipulation was overwhelming in the moment but it wouldn't

last long once Wren took a couple more shots..

With that statement from Heather, Wren finally gave up.

"Ugh, what the hell. Sure." Wren stated before grabbing her glass and downing it at the same time as her (now questionable) friend.

o-o-o

It didn't take long for Heather to get Wren to start dancing with her in the dining room.

There were a lot of people crammed into the room, dancing and having fun with one another.

At first Heather and Wren were being goofy and having so much fun but eventually Heather found this guy that she thought was hot and Wren told her to just go for it.

A guy named Connor had started dancing with Wren when he saw that she was dancing by herself in the group of people and he was okay looks wise.

He was a college student, and if she was sober, she would've been a little judgy about the fact that a college guy is hanging around at a high school party but she was four shots too far in to really give a shit anymore.

Over half an hour had passed since Wren started drinking that vodka and it had shown.

She was carefree with her actions and her cheeks were flushed. She was having a *lot* of fun.

Wren noticed Connor getting a little more touchy with her than he initially had been but instead of stopping him she stopped dancing entirely when she realized just what was going on.

The loud music suddenly seemed to get louder and she could finally feel just how tipsy she actually was.

"Robin.. where is Robin?..." She mumbled to herself before her eyes

widened.

"oh my God! I'm sorry I have to go look for my sister!" Wren yelled over the music, pushing past Connor before he could even ask for her number.

She stood between the living room and dining room at the foot of the stairs.

She had completely forgotten about her sister Robin.

Wren wasted no time and walked out the front door, looking around and seeing that their car was still parked in the road.

Okay. the car was still there.

Wren had the keys so there was no way that Robin got very far.

The girl didn't see her sister anywhere outside in the front yard so she went back inside and stumbled just a little to the backyard.

She wasn't super drunk but she was still questionably sober.

There were a lot more people in the pool now than there was earlier and a lot of trash had found its way on the ground since then.

Wren felt like her brain was spinning a million times a minute in her flurried panic looking for Robin.

She sucked in a few deep breaths, feeling the panic begin to overwhelm her so she took a seat at an empty wooden picnic table.

"Oh my fucking God, I am the worst sister in the entire world.." Wren mumbled, propping her elbows on the wooden table and running her hands stressfully over the side of her face and against the sides of her ponytail before she slouched and hid her face in her arms against the table.

She took a few deeper breaths, calming herself down.

She hasn't ever been drunk before, not even a little bit.

Literally her definition of drinking alcohol was stealing a few sips from her mom's misery wine and even then she never ever drank enough to get drunk. She just did it to be goofy with Robin.

Okay. Robin. Robin *must* be sober.

Wren cannot leave until she finds Robin and Robin cannot leave until she finds Wren.

They both can drive but Wren usually does it since Robin hates it so much.

Wren isn't sober enough to drive tonight so Robin is going to have to be her designated driver for tonight.

Suddenly loud hollering sounded from inside in the living room and within seconds a loud group of guys came barreling out of there.

"*Keg King Hargrove at it again, fellas!*" Tommy H. screamed obnoxiously, his voice breaking from the sheer level of loudness that he was yelling at.

Wren looked up from the table, her eyes following in the direction of almost everybody else that was outside, too.

Surely enough, there he was.

Billy's red button-up was completely undone, revealing his muscular tanned skin to everyone around him.

His chest was glistening from the fact that he had alcohol spilled all over him. It was evident even under the dim lighting of the area around them, and it was very hard not to look at him for her own selfish reasons.

Fucks sake, he screamed sex appeal.

His hair was wild and clearly expressed that he had been partying.

Wren frowned, wondering just how long he had been here. She didn't see him at all until now or even heard about him being here tonight.

A beer was handed to him and he shotgunned it at an impressive rate while his group of friends around him cheered him on.

"Whoo!" Billy shouted, aggressively throwing the can onto the concrete of the back porch. "That's how you fucking do it!" He exclaimed, beating at his chest with his fist a few times.

The group began to laugh but he had such a serious look on his face almost like he had some point to prove to everybody else.

In the middle of his rampage his eyes were wildly traveling around, looking at his surroundings.

He briefly noticed Wren, his crazy appearance hardly faltering as he took notice of the younger girl.

The two stared at each other for a few seconds.

Wren watched the beer dripping down his stubbled jaw and run along the skin on his neck and Billy's eyes momentarily flickered along her appearance.

He noticed her unbuttoned shirt and exposed legs but said nothing as he breathed deeply in and out, quickly catching his breath from shotgunning the beer as impressively fast as he did.

What he did next had taken her by surprise.

A flirtatious smirk was suddenly on his face, the alcohol in his system skyrocketing his confidence to an immeasurable height.

He sent her a wink just like he did with Heather days ago when she first started working at the pool and he sent an acknowledging nod in her direction as he licked at his lips, the taste of beer on his tongue.

It was the first time he had really taken in her appearance while she wasn't wearing a red bathing suit and he wasn't disappointed.

He didn't care about the fact that she couldn't stand him, *Wren Buckley looked great tonight.*

He was the first one to break the eye contact this time, looking over

as Tommy aggressively shoved his arm over Billy's shoulder, struggling with it because Billy was a few inches taller than him.

Wren stared for a few seconds longer as she processed what had just happened, the spinning beginning to start again.

Billy Hargrove was too much for her when she was *sober* so she really couldn't even fathom having a conversation with Billy while she was drunk.

She began to stand up carefully from the table, deciding it was time to look for Robin again.

Wren tried to rush back inside through the congested doorway but she had accidentally bumped rather harshly into someone.

"Ugh, what is your goddamn problem? Watch where you're going skank, you made me spill my drink!" Carol angrily remarked, her red hair and small but frightening demeanor giving her away.

Carol might be tiny but she was *soo* fucking mean.

Wren quickly apologized, realizing that her and Tommy were both sending her glares and not noticing that she had also caught the attention of almost everyone else around them, including Billy.

"Is your apology going to wash out the beer from my clothes? No, I don't fucking think so." Carol almost whined, looking down to her ruined outfit. People had begun to laugh about Carol's misfortune.

"I'm r-really sorry, I'm kinda drunk. but I'll buy you a new shirt or whatever, okay? Not now though, I have to find my sister." Wren simply said before she rushed away and back inside the safety of the house and ignoring whatever it was that Carol yelled at her as she left.

Wren decided that she was going to check upstairs.

She held onto the railing for support as she made her way up, bumping a little bit into a few people who were traveling down them.

She had tried to check the rooms but literally all of them were

locked.

Wren went through with the only idea that she left.. she walked down the stairs and out the front door.

She looked out to the car as she paced her way down the concrete driveway but she noticed someone leaning against the door, already looking at her.

Robin was there, waiting for her.

"Wren.. are you drunk?" Robin asked incredulously and Wren sighed with relief, slinging her arms awkwardly around her sister.

"I missed you so much, I thought I lost you for sure." Wren admitted in a mumble, "You just ran away and I- H-Heather started pressuring me t-to drink with her and then Billy Hargrove started being stupid and I really-" Wren stumbled with her words before she pulled away from Robin.

"I'm reaaaally really sorry about Tammy." Wren said seriously and Robin sent her sister a softened look.

"I'm sorry for ditching you like that. Seeing Tammy kiss someone isn't anything but like.. seeing her kiss a girl when I know that I could never tell her how I felt.. it.. it got to me." Robin admitted quietly, looking down to her hands.

The two didn't say anything for a few seconds.

"And now look what I've done. You're fucking drunk, Wren." Robin added and Wren shook her head, lifting her index finger and pressing it against Robin's lips.

"Yesss, you may have left me. And yes, Heather might've gotten me a liiiittle drunk. but that isn't your fault. I let her do it." Wren admitted, meeting eyes with her sister and then frowning.

"I guess a part of me felt like I actually could get along with these people, you know?" She bit at her bottom lip, looking down to her feet.

"But then I ruined Carol's sweater by bumping into her.. it totally made her spill her drink all over herself and she called me a skank.."

"Wren you fucking *didn't!*" Robin exclaimed, eyes widening.

Wren nodded slowly, and her sister broke out into amused, uncontrolled laughter.

"It's not funny! She hates my guts now."

"Wren, Carol hates everyone's guts. She's shrill for no reason. Besides, you and Carol aren't even on the same level of personality." Robin comforted and Wren giggled softly.

"I'm um.. ready to go home." Wren admitted suddenly and Robin hurriedly nodded, relieved that her sister had mentioned it finally.

"Oh yeah, me too. Gimme the keys already. No way you're driving, if mom finds out that I ran away and you got drunk tonight, we're toast."

5. Ch 5 - Pool Noodle Mayhem

It was the first Monday off from school during the summer of '85 and Wren didn't spend her time sleeping in but instead was working at the pool.

The weekend was definitely.. interesting for her.

Robin and Wren got home safely (thanks to Robin being the designated driver).

Luckily the two girls didn't get questioned about how things went at the party because their parents were distracted watching a movie on the TV when they walked through the door before twelve a.m. which was their curfew time.

Wren wasn't super drunk that night but she sure slept like a baby once she changed into her pajamas and flopped onto her cozy bed.

She had that Sunday to recover and now she was diving head first into the pool rush of summer.

Coming into work today turned out to be a little different than what she was used to.

Heather didn't have to work today and she was a little relieved by that.

Wren was still kinda bothered by the way that Heather had brushed off Robin's disappearance as nothing but she knew that Heather probably didn't care a single bit and likely thought anything about it after it happened.

Wren couldn't hold it against her; they were teenagers. They weren't supposed to have to worry about people disappearing.

She was still happy though because that meant she wouldn't have to hear any jokes about drinking or dirty dancing with hot college guys.. today, anyways.

Wren did have to work with Billy today and that was what weirded

her out the most.

She remembered the way he was looking at her and the wink he sent in her direction.

She could clearly remember the fact that she stared at Billy Hargrove that night for several seconds too long for her liking.

She knew that Billy would remember that, too.

Or maybe not.

He gets attention from a lot of girls, he probably couldn't even keep track of the amount of times he winked at girls that night in his drunken spiel.

He was fucking hammered by what she could assume.

Wren was making her way over from the kiddie area and to the main pool.

She already had to clean up some throw-up in the kiddie pool which was *so* nasty.

Why didn't t people ever talk about the fact that lifeguards also double as pool janitors?

Because of the puke incident she was very eager to make her way over to the lifeguard seat.. even if Billy was the one she had to switch watch with.

"Dammit, Greg! If I see you cannonball in the steep end one more time, I'm going to kick your stupid ass ou-"

"Sheesh, man. Calm down, you're gonna inhale that whistle and choke on it if you're any louder." Wren laughed, causing the older boy to glimpse down at her but he huffed out an annoyed breath, eyeing the shithead kid known as "Greg".

"These fuckin' kids can kiss my ass. They're almost as bad as Max's friends." Billy sneered, causing Wren to raise a curious eyebrow.

"Max?"

"My step-sister." Billy explained.

"You've never mentioned her before, I had no idea. How old is she?"

"Oh, I didn't realize that you were entitled to hearing all about me." He snapped snarkily but Wren just sighed.

"You're being aggressive for no reason, hothead. I was just making conversation."

A short silence came over the two of them and as Wren looked out to the pool filled with people of all ages swimming within it, Billy spoke again.

"She's fourteen. Hangs out with a bunch of dweebs though. They're into all of that nerdy shit like Star Wars and scary movies or whatever."

An amused smile formed over Wren's face while she gripped onto the elevated metal bar of the lifeguard seat.

"She actually sounds pretty cool to me." The teenager admitted, her voice a bit quiet.

Billy let out a chuckle but there was no humor to it. It was bitter.

"Max isn't too bad I guess. But her friends are fucking annoying and her boyfriend is the worst out of all of 'em."

"What's so bad about her boyfrien-"

"You're asking too many questions." Billy stated in an unbothered tone but there was a small hint of amusement in his voice rather than anger. "What're you so interested in me for all of a sudden?" He prodded.

Wren glanced up toward him but it was difficult to see Billy from the angle she was at.

"Don't flatter yourself. I wasn't interested in *you*, I was just wondering

about your sister. You never talk about her or anything."

"..So you really did go to that party on Saturday night, didn't you?" He branched off from the topic of conversation but Wren didn't point it out and instead sucked in a deep breath of air.

"Ahh, yeah I did. You didn't believe me when I said I was going?"

"Like I said, doll. You're *not exactly* the party type." Billy had the string of his whistle around his index finger, spinning it around in boredom.

"Well I believed you when you said you had a hot date that night. What happened Mr. Keg King Hargrove, did your plans fall through?"

"Decided I didn't want to deal with getting to know a new chick, wanted to get piss drunk instead." Billy explained, causing Wren to raise a brow.

Billy bailed out on a date with an older girl to go to Heather's party instead? That isn't such a weird thing to say, but he seemed pretty interested in whoever he was going to go on a date with after their shift had ended that night.

She hadn't said anything in response but she didn't have to. He spoke for her.

"Yellow looks hot on you. Always seeing you sunburned in a lifeguard bathing suit makes you look like a lobster."

There were a few things about that statement that annoyed her.

Wren couldn't see his facial expression but she was sure that by the lilt in his voice that he had a goddamn smirk on his face.

At first she was annoyed by his remark but then she realized that he had given her a backhanded compliment.

"Was that.. wait a second.. did you just give me a compliment in your own totally weird way without being a *complete* perv?"

"Don't make me regret it, Buckley." Billy huffed out as he climbed

down the ladder, deciding that it was about time to let her take over. "You looked good, take that however you want."

She watched him for a moment while he did so, not noticing the smallest smile that had been on his lips before she was able to get a good look at him.

"Thanks, I guess." The girl stated a bit awkwardly but it was still genuine.

The teen hadn't realized it either but the tiniest twitch of a smile had also come and gone on her face as well.

Once Billy had stepped foot on the concrete it was clear that the air had changed a bit.

The moms reacted to his movements in particular, all spiffed and straightened up like they always do when he has to walk by them.

"Look at them." Wren giggled a bit, finding their reactions obnoxious but still funny.

Billy did, glancing past Wren and gazing over at the mothers who were already watching him. The two teenagers could easily tell even if some of them had sunglasses covering their field of vision.

"Are you actually interested in Mrs. Wheeler?" Wren randomly asked as she began to climb up the ladder, seeing that he hadn't walked away just yet.

A boyish smile was on his face as he waved at them coolly, shrugging some at Wren's question and then turning his head to watch her as she climbed up.

"Think she's pretty hot." He admitted and Wren made a face as she sat in the seat and made herself comfortable.

"Honestly Billy.. that's really weird." She stated, amusement laced in her voice.

"Why, cause she's married? We both know that doesn't mean shit to a lot of people."

"I mean? yeah because she's married. But no. She's like twice your age and a *mom*. You see the way every other girl looks at you. Why be so interested in somebody who's just going to make things complicated for you? You don't even have a chance."

Billy hummed softly, "And that's the fun of it. Knowing she's off limits gives me something to do around here in this shithole town. What d'you care so much for?"

"I really, truly don't care that much. I only care enough to say something in defense for her kids. Her daughter Nancy has always been sweet." She admitted and bit at the inside of her cheek for a few seconds while she thought.

"For real though.. going after somebody whose married is really messed up." She added with a small frown on her face.

"Then who should I be going after? Somebody like you?"

Wren squinted as she looked out to the people swimming, preventing herself from rolling her eyes at his unbelievable ego.

"If that person isn't unavailable, then sure. Knock yourself out, hotshot. Just stop jeopardizing relationships. That's pretty uncool and it'd make you a homewrecker at the fresh age of eighteen." She finalized.

Billy didn't say anything in response to her statement, he just replied with a "gotcha" and began to walk away.

Wren was too busy keeping an eye on the people swimming in the pool to notice that this time when he walked by the older women, he didn't look their way.

He didn't do it at all even if it meant missing out on Mrs. Wheeler's attention, which a part of him genuinely enjoyed and not just for the kicks.

Billy wouldn't say it out loud but maybe Wren had a point. Something about her words stuck with him.

Maybe Billy didn't look over at the moms this time around but that

didn't mean he couldn't revel in the stares that he knew he was receiving.

o-o-o

Wren let out a soft sigh of relief as she drank from the cold water she had just grabbed from concession, the hot weather of the day finally catching up with her.

The pool had just closed and everyone was leaving.

It was a crazy busy day. Saturday wasn't even as bad as this first Monday off from school was.

She was standing there making conversation with their manager, Eric. Kelly was there too.

She was sitting inside with him like she usually did, flipping through one of the few magazines that they had back there.

Billy was shepherding everyone away, he was the best at it.

He had a knack with freaking out the little kids enough to get them out of the water. Nothing like a little bit of childhood trauma.

Once everyone was gone Billy had already started checking that things were cleaned up and put away and Wren felt a little bad because he hadn't even said anything about anyone helping him.

She took the initiative to walk away from the concession and made her way over.

"What've you done already?" She asked from the other side of the pool.

"Filters are fine. Some asshole had a pool noodle and bit pieces out of it and now they're floating around. Wanna clean it up?" Billy replied, handing over the net that cleaned out the pool.

Wren let out an uncontrolled laugh at his words, looking at the pool and seeing the bright green pieces floating just like he told her.

"Oh my God, I'm actually convinced that people come here just to make our lives even suckier. Why would somebody even do that?" Wren joked incredulously, not angry over it but finding the humor in the situation.

She began to sweep the pool with the stick net to fish out the pieces while Billy cleaned up the garbage laying around the perimeter of the pool and in the grass.

The pieces were actually.. really difficult to get out.

They kept swishing around and did not want to go into the net.

By the time ten minutes had passed she was annoyed.

"Ugh dammit. Billy, I might need help with this." Wren admitted.

"You need help with that? I figured it was pretty self-explanatory Buckley." Billy chuckled before making his way over to her.

"Yeah, it is- but I only have a few pieces left and my arms are starting to hurt."

"Fine. When you can't get the rest out there's only one thing left to do." He explained, eyes narrowing over to the water.

She looked at him expectantly but he just shrugged and held his hand out for the net.

She handed it to him and watched as he put it away on the wall.

"When the net doesn't work anymore you've gotta go in and get them yourself." He began and she sighed. She really didn't want to do that.

"Really?" Wren stated, turning her back and looking at the pool.

She didn't have much time to consider going in by the time she felt a pair of hands pick her up by her legs, causing her mind to immediately panic and her heart to drop.

"Billy oh my God what are you do-" She began, squirming in his grasp and looking up at him.

He picked her up like it was nothing and was carrying her bridal-style in his arms, heading closer to the edge of the pool.

Damn, she was pretty lightweight.

He had this big smile on his face. Not a charming one but one of his sneaky smiles when he knew he was doing something that he shouldn't be doing..

"I'm making it easier for you, doll." Billy remarked, the grin not faltering as he swayed her body a bit and made the motion to fling her into the pool.

"Stop moving, you're making this harder than it needs to be!"

Wren was clutching onto him tightly, dead set on dragging him down with her.

And it worked.

In the process of Billy trying to toss her into the water, Wren's hand gripping onto him did not break and it caused Billy to lose his footing, making him stumble into the warm water of the pool right with her.

Suddenly Wren was no longer dry. She was engulfed by the warm water of the pool in the deep end.

It took her a few seconds to resurface.

When she did she coughed up some water that had managed to get into her nose.

"I'm literally gonna kill you!" Wren angrily spat as she looked around for Billy, the loud laugh coming from him giving his location away.

The two were both swimming in place, his demeanor obnoxiously and deviously bright and Wren's full of anger.

Billy reached out for a pool noodle piece that happened to be right next to him, swimming over to the edge of the pool and tossing it onto the concrete.

Wren watched as he pulled himself effortlessly out of the water and sat on the edge.

His hair was soaked and falling into his eyes and the water was cascading down his tanned skin.

She cursed him mentally for always looking as good as he does.

The two had made quite a bit of noise whenever they splashed into the pool and Kelly made her way over.

"Uh, what the hell..?" She asked, eliciting a look from Wren.

"Yeah Billy, what the hell?" Wren glared at him in between her wades in the water, grabbing the remaining pieces of plastic and tossing them to the exterior of the pool.

"Hey, she said she wanted help. I tossed her in and she couldn't keep her hands off of me and so she pulled me in with her." Billy explained and Wren scoffed as she climbed out of the pool using the ladder nearby.

"*Hah.* That is partially what happened but you didn't tell me that you were going to chuck me into the pool yourself." Wren snapped.

Kelly chomped on her gum, arms crossed as her eyes traveled back and forth between the two momentarily.

If they were going to flirt with each other why'd they have to be so obvious about it? It was gag worthy..

She couldn't wait to tell Heather about it.

"..okay. Well I'm changing and getting out of here. You guys lock up." Kelly replied indifferently, blowing a bubble and popping it before she walked into the girls' changing room.

Wren pulled her hair down from the bun it was in and wrung her hair out, ignoring Billy who was still sitting.

"I'm never doing a favor for you ever again." Wren muttered loud enough for him to hear. He looked back at her, raising a playful

brow.

"Admit it, it was a rush." He responded before looking down to his feet that were in the water. She left her hair down to dry, looking at him. His back was turned to her.

"Not really. You kinda scared the shit out of me whenever you started picking me up. I hate when people do that." She admitted.

Billy began to get up out of the water. Wren looked over to the side, deciding that she wasn't going to let him catch her watching him.

It was something that she didn't do often, but when she did, he always had to notice.

"Well you're lucky that I don't hate when people stare." He casually remarked, "You couldn't take your eyes off me at Heather's party."

"You say that so confidently. Didn't it occur to you that maybe I was wondering why you were there instead of on a date? You were totally uninterested in going to that from what you told me." Wren pointed out as the boy stretched his muscles, his tanned skin over his muscles bragging their size as he did so.

"Already told ya, wasn't feeling it." Billy simply said, causing for Wren to send him an unsure look.

"Billy, no offense, but when are you not feeling going out with girls? You're not exactly gentleman material from what I know of.."

An expression Wren didn't recognize from Billy seemed to pull at his features; it wasn't a look of anger, but one of curiosity.

"What, are you talking about fucking?"

Wren felt her cheeks flush and her mouth dropped a little.

"I- I mean- if you wanna put it that way? Yeah?" She finally finished, crossing her arms over her chest as she suddenly felt very flustered.

He really didn't care about the way he spoke and she wouldn't admit it out loud but something about Billy's openness was kind of

exhilarating.

Billy said whatever he wanted and did whatever he wanted and Wren couldn't fathom a lifestyle like that.

"Believe it or not, Buckley, but sometimes people have shit going on in their lives that you don't know about. I cancelled the date and wanted to get shit-faced instead. Point blank, leave it the fuck alone." Billy snapped pretty aggressively, throwing Wren off guard.

He was just so chill a few seconds ago and it seemed like somewhere in the middle of his explanation, he just got angry and carried away.

Before she could say anything Billy was starting to walk away from her so that he could change and get the hell out of here.

His body was tensed as he nearly sauntered away but Wren wasn't having it.

"Hey Billy? You know what, you're not gonna do this again." She angrily said, quickly following suit and grabbing his arm carefully, making him turn to look at her.

He did turn to look down to her, but in the process, his arm jerked away from her grip defensively and his eyes were filled with anger.

"Don't grab me." He hissed, feet planted and shoulders squared.

His aggression caused her to take a hesitant step back but she took in a breath and composed herself, knowing that Billy might be a bit intimidating but she had nothing to be afraid of.

"Hey, I'm sorry. But I just have to say something." Wren began, a frustrated frown on her face.

"Listen, Billy. I know we don't really know each other but you were somebody I go- went to school with.. and we work together. And I have my opinions on you and I know what I have heard about you but sometimes I see some side of you that isn't what I knew of you at all. You put on this front and sometimes you lose it when we have conversations with one another and when you realize it, you get angry at me for no reason. Can't you just talk to me without getting

so defensive?" She questioned, a defeated tone in her voice.

The two just looked at each other for a few moments while he processed what she said, that look of pure anger in his eyes turning into something foreign.

She couldn't pinpoint what he was feeling, he was good at hiding his emotions. Too good.

"I think you're confused," Billy started, inching closer to her smaller stature. His voice got lower.

"There is nothing more to me than what you see. What you see is what you get. I don't know what you fucking expect from me but you need to realize that maybe I don't want you questioning me every time we're around each other." His words were cold and his gaze was unfaltering.

Wren let out a soft sigh before she nodded and looked down to her feet for a few seconds.

"Okay, Billy. I'm not going to force you to admit anything or claim that I know who you are or anything. I just wanted to let you know that someone around you who viewed you one way is starting to believe that maybe you're actually not such a bad person and that's only after having a couple of conversations with you. I get it, being expected to be one person while you feel like you're something totally different sucks. But again, I'm not gonna force you to talk to me about it.. if you ever want to though you know who you can go to." She finalized, her words softer than the ones she spoke to him earlier when she first began questioning him.

She took a few steps backward away from him, registering the look on his face.

He looked.. surprised. His brows had raised and he simply stared at her.

"I'll see ya tomorrow, Billy.." Wren said quietly, sending him a pursed-lip smile before she turned and walked away to go into the girls' changing room.

For the first time in his life Billy had actually felt that maybe he wasn't as categorized as he thought he was.

She saw through his front that he presented to everybody else.

Wren didn't know a whole lot about Billy but she knew that he put on this weird show for everybody in Hawkins.

They saw the Billy that he wanted them to see but she seemed to recognize that that was a front before he even did.

Wren Buckley sure was something.

6. Ch 6 - Grand Opening

Wren made her way into Scoops Ahoy which took her a little bit to find since the mall was so packed and she also had no idea where she was going.

The new mall in Hawkins was a breath of fresh air for most of its residents.

Once Robin had her in person interview, she was a shoo-in for some kind of job here..

Admittedly, Wren wasn't really expecting her sister to accept getting a job at a place where she was scooping ice cream all day.

Wren had to gently nudge her way around the shopping center to even manage inside of the store due to people traveling in and out of everywhere.

It was weird, seeing all of these people in Hawkins wasn't something that she was used to.

It almost convinced her that maybe sticking around could be tolerable some day but she knew that that wasn't the case.

She immediately looked over to the counter where she expected her sister to be and surely enough, she was right.

There was Robin; clad in her tacky white hat sporting "AHOY", a striped sailor shirt, blue vest and shorts, white knee highs and over worn red converse that she'd stolen from Wren's wardrobe.

They shared everything so it wasn't like she was surprised or anything.

Wren *was* surprised by something else, though..

Another employee was working with her, manning the register.

Steve Harrington?

Huh. Wren wouldn't exactly say that she was surprised that he ended up working at a place like this but she was surprised to see him here.

She skipped the line, ignoring the few annoyed comments she received as she walked up to the glass display case where her sister was standing behind.

"Happy first day of employment! You have about fifty more years to go!" Wren sarcastically cheered, causing Robin to chuckle as she pointed the metal scoop towards her sister.

"You better watch it. I've almost chucked this at several different heads today and being my sister doesn't make you an exception." Robin playfully smirked but their moment of joking was interrupted.

"Hey uh-" Steve stuttered, "..girl," his recognizable voice rung and the two girls' heads turned to look at him but he hadn't pried his focus from giving a mother the correct amount of change.

"U-Uh- what, Steve?" Robin mocked his stutter, impatiently waiting for his response.

"Medium mint chocolate chip."

Robin rolled her eyes as she grabbed a medium ice cream cup and bitterly stabbed at the bright colored ice-cream with the utensil.

"Literally been here for like three hours now and he can't remember my name." Robin retorted, making Wren giggle at her sister's situation.

"Well you gotta give him some credit. You're working with Steve Harrington. He's too busy counting the correct change." Wren lightly joked, making Robin shake her head and laugh quietly as she handed the woman the cup of ice cream.

"I can't believe that we're both working now. And most of all, you get to work with him?" Wren incredulously stated, mostly joking but also being a bit serious.

Steve wasn't a terrible guy.. at least Wren didn't think so, anyways.

She never got to speak to him before he graduated, he was always too busy hanging out with the in-crowd.

He dated Nancy Wheeler for a little while which was kind of surprising saying that she didn't seem like his type.

"Yeah, I know." Robin sighed.

Wren knew what her sister was thinking; she was head over heels for Tammy Thompson, but Tammy was completely innocent when it came to knowing about Robin's feelings for her.

Steve had grown to be somebody that Robin had obsessed over during the course of her junior year. Steve would walk into class late every other day with that same stupid breakfast, that same stupid hair and that same stupid smile and all of the same foolish girls watching him.

As far as Robin was concerned, Steve Harrington sucked.

"Need a banana split, pronto." Steve said, handing the customer their change. They were the last one in line.

The store was decently busy, but there was a short period where no one was longer waiting for an order except the person waiting for their ice cream.

"Yanno, I've got a name and a name tag. Haven't you pieced it together that that may just help you remember what my name is, Steve?" Robin responded as the older boy finally turned in their direction, leaning towards the counter and propping himself up with his right palm pressed against the countertop.

Robin began to cut and prepare the banana for the sundae but Wren was looking at Steve who was watching Robin slice away at the fruit.

"Be nice to me.." His eyes squinted a little as he peered to see what her name tag said but he couldn't see what it said from the position she was facing.

"Rob-" Robin began to grumble but Steve interrupted her.

"Robin! Be nice. We're coworkers now. Team work makes the dream work, am I right ladies?" Steve grinned but neither of them laughed. Instead Robin started finishing up the sundae and Wren pursed her lips to hide a smile.

Steve noticed and he looked at Wren, straightening up his posture some and clearing his throat a little.

"Sooo.. come here often?" Steve asked in an implying tone, raising a brow with inclination.

This time Robin froze and looked over at Steve, a speechless expression on her face while Wren bit back laughter.

Was Steve.. hitting on her?

"..what? was it something I said? Is it the hair? I swear it doesn't always look like this yanno. It's just the stupid hat," He began, somewhat flustered.

Robin handed the customer the banana split and said a friendly "have a great day!" and then she interrupted him before he could say anything else.

"First of all, we opened today, so no. She doesn't come here often." Robin stated, making Steve realize that his shot failed miserably but Robin continued.

"And second.. ew. Wren is my sister, Harrington. We're twins." Her sister sighed, making Steve look between the two of them before the realization dawned on him.

"Oh holy shiii-" He paused, realizing he couldn't cuss in front of customers. "iitaki mushrooms, really?" He said in slight awe, before he frowned. "We went to school together and I had no idea. Didn't even know your name.." He admitted, before the girls shared a look and Wren shrugged.

"Honestly you're not the first one to say that. A lot of people know we're sisters but they don't usually know that we're twins." Wren explained before she sent him a grin. "I'll forget your bad pickup line if you promise not to hit on me again."

"What pickup line?" Steve coolly and casually stated as a customer approached the register, another small laugh coming from Wren and Robin sent her a knowing smile.

"Don't worry, he's been hitting on girls all day." Her sister explained. Wren wasn't sure if that was supposed to make her feel better or worse but she went with the first option.

"He's a lot.. but he isn't too bad." Robin explained to her sister as Steve was preoccupied accidentally dropping change as he was handing it to the customer. Wren nodded in agreement.

"Could always be worse. At least it's somebody that you kinda know." Wren added before she pursed her lips and wiggled her brows.

"So.. ya gonna hook me up with that employee discount when I order some ice cream or what, sailor?"

o-o-o

Wren was sitting at one of the tables around the fountain as she thumbed over a page of the book she was reading, *The Woman in Black*.

It was around 3 P.M. now and Robin was supposed to be getting off work in about an hour or so.

Wren had taken to passing the time with reading after she browsed through a couple of the stores.

She didn't buy anything but she also wasn't really looking for anything either.

She had been sitting there for a little while since she bought an ice cream from Scoops Ahoy and she chatted with Steve and Robin for a bit longer because the two were honestly pretty funny.

Wren could tell Robin wasn't the biggest fan of Steve but they bickered back and forth and it was nice to sit in on the comedy act.

She was about halfway through the book, her eyes quickly narrowing along the lightly browned pages of the book from their reading room

at home.

The Buckley household had a nice little collection of books of all kinds and genres available at their disposal and the collection only grew as the girls got older and they absorbed fiction almost as much as fact.

She had lazily fixed her hair so that it was half up and half down, no longer falling into her eyes as she had her head tilted down to read the words copied onto the pages in front of her.

It took her some time to get into the right headspace to read since the mall was bolstering with life.

There were a lot of people here today as expected, saying that it was the grand opening.

She had seen all kinds of people she went to school with but said hello to no one since nobody had seemed to notice her.

She didn't mind knowing that; she kind of preferred it since she was now invested in her book.

She took a bite of her ice cream, the cup about halfway empty now and not noticing that the book was held a bit closer to her face now that it was at an intense part of the storyline.

Before she could finish her sentence the small book was plucked from her hands by some unknown figure.

"What the hell?" Wren angrily began, quickly looking up only to see Billy Hargrove peering at the pages with a feigned look of curiosity on his face.

"Mm. It's the grand opening of Starcourt and you're reading.. *The Woman in Black*? C'mon, Wren. Where's your sense of adventure? Don't you do anything fun?" Billy teased, cocking his head to the side as he looked down to her.

She attempted to reach for the book but he lifted it before she could snatch it back.

"Ah ah ah." He tauntingly sing-songed and ran his tongue over his lips before he grinned deviously.

He paced over to the other side of the small, rounded table, giving the girl a clear opportunity to skim her eyes over his appearance.

His hair was nicely fixed as it usually was, sporting a black denim jacket, a white v-neck tee and some dark wash jeans.

Nothing out of the usual for the bad boy's look and edgy enough to coincide with his demeanor.

Wren's eyes had wandered along his backside as he was turned away from her, noticing the fit of his jeans and bashfully turning her eyes away when she realized what she was doing.

Dammit, she shouldn't be checking out Billy..

The teenager straightened up her posture and turned her focus back to him again when he slumped down in the seat in front of her, taking a few moments to thumb through the pages.

"Have.. have you read it before?" Wren finally asked before the boy's eyes traveled across the table to look at her.

An amused look was on his face now as he leant forward, resting his elbows on the table after he slid the book on the table back over to her.

"No."

"Do you even read?" The girl asked, receiving a smart-ass look from him.

"Of course I do."

"Ugh, I meant for fun. Not everybody gets to cruise around in a car all day, yanno.." Wren mumbled as she reached for the novel, not noticing the way Billy's eyes traveled over her and her appearance today.

Wren was wearing a red cropped tee with yellow on the ends of the

sleeves and the bottom of the shirt, with white shorts and a blue, yellow and red belt wrapped around her waist. She was wearing the same white shoes from the party she went to last weekend.

"The place just opened today and you're sittin' here reading? Didn't come here with anybody?" Billy asked after a moment of silence between the two of them, his stare making her shift a bit in the metal chair.

"No.." She fiddled with the paper cover of the book, biting the inside of her cheek for a few seconds before she explained. "I'm waiting for my sister to get out of work, I'm picking her up. It's her first day at Scoops Ahoy."

Billy's eyes lingered on her face, his demeanor cool and relaxed as he listened. His eyes narrowed down to the cup of ice cream near her but she hadn't noticed his hand reach out for the blue cup and his fingers wrap around it as she glanced around herself, suddenly very interested in her surroundings when she knew Billy's eyes were on her.

"When's she get out?" The older teenage boy questioned calmly, reaching for the plastic utensil and scooping some of the dessert and taking a casual bite from it, dying to see her reaction when she would finally notice what was going on.

"Four." Wren answered before her eyes traveled back to look at him again but they widened as she realized what he was doing.

"Billy, no!" She whined, reaching for the cup but he sent her a smirk and pulled the cup off of the table and away from her as he had already taken a hefty bite from the serving.

"C'mon, chick. It's just ice cream, I'll buy ya some more if it really means that much to you." Billy snickered, wiggling his eyebrows as he helped himself to another generous bite of the treat.

"Mm, fuck. That's pretty good." He admitted, wiping at his mouth with his thumb as he realized that a drop had missed his mouth and was now on the corner of his lips.

"You missed some of it, you jerk." She bitterly stated, eyes glaring at him.

"Oh," Billy exhaled, "Did I?" He asked.

"Yeah.." Wren shot with some attitude, pointing to the corner of her lips to signify where the mess was.

The boy didn't say anything but instead he lifted his hand to his mouth and thumbed at the spot on the right corner of them before looking at the residue now on the pad of his thumb.

His eyes traveled across the small table to directly meet eyes with her as she stared, "What?" She impatiently prodded.

Billy took it to himself to lift his thumb to his mouth and to lightly suck the small bit of ice cream off the tip of his finger, making Wren feel a rush of heat come over her that she wasn't too familiar with.

"Thanks for the ice cream, doll. It's delicious." Billy remarked slowly and suggestively, chuckling to himself as he began to fiddle with the spoon for another bite.

Wren wasn't sure what to do after that situation or how to react to it, she just knew that her cheeks were probably bright with embarrassment and that her mouth had been open with shock for far too long and that Billy was getting to her just like he wanted to.

The sound of her chair scooting harshly on the tile floor sounded but it wasn't noticeable to anybody but them since it was already pretty loud in the mall.

"You've managed to ruin one of the best parts of the book, steal my ice cream and make me super uncomfortable within minutes of walking up to me and making yourself comfortable. You can keep the ice cream. I'm leaving." Wren began and stood up.

"Hey, look. I was just messin' around with ya. Why d'you have to take everything so seriously?" Billy questioned as he ate, eyes flickering up to hers indifferently.

"I don't take everything so seriously, Billy. you're always looking for

ways to make me angry or to mess with me." Wren frowned, folding her arms across her chest.

"I like when you get riled up, is that so bad? Who else can do that to you?" Billy took another bite, finishing off the remnants of what she had when he first started their conversation.

Wren hesitated with her next response because his words threw her off a little bit. What was she even supposed to say to that?

"Why do you like it when I get angry? What part of your twisted brain is in to that?" She shot, the words coming off a tad more aggressive than she meant but the boy only grinned at her.

"Baby, every part of me is in to that." Billy began, the pet name causing the girl to shift her weight on her feet a little and her heart rate increase. "You blend in with everybody else any other time, but you get angry at me. You get so angry and you become alive. How often do you get to feel that way in a shitty town like Hawkins with boring people all around you, huh?"

She said nothing in response to him this time around, making him raise his brows and lean over the table some more, staring up at her.

Even when she was standing up and was in the authoritative position, Billy still managed to get her feeling like she was two feet tall and he was towering over her.

"Tell me, Wren." His voice rung, demanding an answer.

"What is your point, Billy?" Wren frowned, her eyes nervously watching him.

"My point,.. " Billy began as he stood up, leaving the empty cup on the table as he did so. "Is that I don't *like it* when you yell at me. I fuckin' *love it*." He walked over to her, closing the already-small distance between them and peering down at her.

His cologne filled her senses and she struggled to get a grip on reality.

"And if you didn't like it, you would walk away without even

bothering to speak to me every time I approach you." Billy slowly trailed and the girl scoffed.

"Tell me I'm wrong, Wren." He hummed, his bright eyes shining with some sort of emotion that she couldn't quite place.

Silence.

"...I'm waiting."

Still nothing.

Billy licked his lips again, chuckling knowingly as she finally broke eye contact from him and looked away.

Billy was making Wren's head in a million different directions.

She knew it wasn't acceptable, but a part of her wanted to slap that stupid grin off his face. Meanwhile, he really wanted to close that space between the two of them..

"Go out with me tomorrow." Billy finally responded, breaking the silence and causing her to look at him once again.

Her eyes widened incredulously and his head cocked to the side some, questioning her shock.

"W-What did you just say?"

"I said go out with me tomorrow." He repeated boldly.

"No. I have work." Wren shot him down just as boldly, pushing her chair in. She began to walk away but he followed coolly next to her.

"No shit, Buckley. I do, too. I meant after." Billy explained.

Wren kept walking at a rushed pace.

She didn't know where she could possibly be going since she was Robin's ride home but she couldn't stay at that table where Billy kept messing with her like she was his prey.

"You're unbelievable." She rolled her eyes, clutching her book tightly

in her sweaty grasp. Dammit, she was so nervous and antsy.

"In more ways than one." Billy shot back, easily recovering from her statement.

Wren groaned, stopping suddenly and looking at him.

"If I agree to hang out with you for.. I don't know. An hour or two, will you *please* just leave me alone?"

"For now, if that's what you want."

Fucks sake, he was relentless. She admired can-do attitudes but Billy having that trait was absolutely frustrating.

"Fine. Okay- fine." Wren agreed.

Billy didn't really react to what she said; he took the news and sent her a knowing smile.

"Didn't take as long as I was expecting.. bring a change of clothes tomorrow to work. Nothing dressy, either. Don't want you to show me up.. see ya then, doll." The boy winked at her before he took a step away from her and walked away.

Wren stood there for several seconds, a deep frown set on her face as she processed the sudden turn of events.

Billy convinced her to hang out with him tomorrow.. at night.

No, he didn't convince her.

He pestered her until she accepted.

A part of her thought on this. Billy was right. It didn't take a whole lot of convincing on his part to win her over.

She didn't want to admit it but there was a part of Wren that wondered what it was about Billy that drew her in to him just like everybody else was drawn to him around here.

He knew his way around people and was a master manipulator, that's

for sure.

Wren's eyes narrowed to the big clock on the wall and realized that she only had about forty more minutes of waiting for Robin to get out of work.

Ugh, Wren had some explaining to do..

7. Ch 7 - Hitched & Gone

/author's note: hi all! i just wanted to add a little disclaimer that this story is rated mature for a reason other than for the fact that crude language is involved. there will be discussions about race/discrimination, sexuality, and eventual smut scenes in this story. drinking and drug use is also a minor occurrence.

i will probably tag chapters that have smut so readers who want to avoid it can skip it.

sorry for the interruption but i wanted to put some warnings in to place now rather than later.

i hope you enjoy this extra long chapter where things rly get interesting!/

o-o-o

Wren was sitting criss-crossed on her bed as her sister paced about the room, getting ready to leave for her work at the mall.

She watched Robin as she gradually pulled on the uniform, many annoyed groans and sighs sounding from her as she willed herself along.

Wren was grateful that the pool was closer and required no makeup or general effort in appearance because whatever effort you put in will be either be sweated off or soaked off from being in the water if need be.

"Oh hey- I forgot to ask. Let's go see a movie after we get out of work today. I haven't seen a movie there yet but I heard that it's kick ass. Bring your purse because I wanna sneak in some snacks." Robin spoke as she had finished getting dressed but was now fixing her hair so that it looked a bit more maintained.

It slipped past Wren's mind that Robin did not know that her and Billy were going to hang out today.

She decided not to tell Robin about the incident at the mall because

Robin had been yelled at by a grouchy mom who said she wanted "sailor's strawberry" but was given some cherry flavor instead.

Steve had been working ice cream and Robin was manning the register when the incident happened but the customer seemed more aggravated with Robin despite her having no control over what Steve had accidentally given her.

It annoyed Robin but she took the fall for him anyways.

When it was all said and done, Steve and Robin cracked a few jokes and they'd both forgotten about it.

"I actually uhm.. I can't go see a movie tonight." She admitted, eliciting a curious look from her sister.

Robin made an amused face, raising a brow and looking away from the mirror for a few seconds to meet eyes with Wren.

"Yeah right." Robin hardly acknowledged Wren's statement.

"You can't expect me to sneak in all of the snacks on my own. Be there or be square, loser."

Wren felt her stomach twist a little into knots when she realized that she'd *have* to tell Robin now and she truly couldn't predict how her sister was going to react to what she was about to say.

"I'm serious Robin.. I have plans."

Wren seemed to have caught Robin's attention now when her sister realized the sincerity in Wren's tone.

Wren's lips parted as she hesitated to get the words out at first.

"Yesterday whenever I was waiting for you at the mall to get out of work.. Billy Hargrove talked to me and he asked me to hang out with him after work today." Wren explained slowly, not believing the words that came out of her mouth.

It sounded so weird when she actually explained it to somebody else.

Robin, who had taken to tugging on her shoes froze and looked at Wren for several seconds.

"Wait- I? Are you messing with me or did you just say that Billy asked you out and you said.. yes?"

"I didn't say yes at first, and he didn't ask me out. Well, he did.. but it's not a date for me. Honestly he kind of not-so-seriously coerced me into agreeing to do it. He grabbed my book from me and ate my food and made me super uncomfortable so I started to leave and he followed me and asked me to hang out." Wren quickly explained to Robin.

Robin had this disgusted look of disbelief on her face and Wren knew what she was thinking.

"I swear I did say no. But he wouldn't go away until I agreed and in the moment that was all I really wanted so I didn't think it through." As Wren explained, her fingers nervous fidgeted in her lap.

"He left before I could say anything else, really. Besides it's just for an hour or two. I've already talked to mom about it and she doesn't care."

Robin said nothing as she tied her shoes and even as she stood up to grab her bag and shove her hat in to it.

"Robin? Are you mad at me? Why aren't you saying anything?"

"Uh, I don't know Wren. Maybe it's because I'm only hearing about this now? You know what kind of person Billy is, we both know what his intentions are going to be. It was seriously stupid of you to agree to do that." Robin honestly stated.

That was one thing that Robin did take pride in; she had no filter when it came to how she felt about things.

Wren and Robin were always super honest with each other.. usually.

"You're saying that like I wanted to say yes. I didn't want to but I work with him and truthfully he hasn't been that bad. It's not like it's a date or anything." Wren defensively replied, receiving a glare from

Robin.

"Do you hear yourself right now? *"He hasn't been that bad"?*" Robin scoffed, a frown deep-set on her features.

"Do *you* hear yourself? You're getting so angry at me for something that I couldn't help." Wren retaliated.

"Oh bullshit. We both know that you could've said no to him and you could've kept saying it. Obviously if you weren't interested in something about him you would've told me about it."

Wren straightened up, not enjoying the confrontational conversation the two were now having.

"I'm sorry that I said yes, okay? I mean- maybe I can tell him later that I have to cancel. Would that make you feel better?" Wren bitterly remarked.

Robin scoffed, a look of disappointment clear on her expression.

"Wren.. it wasn't about you saying yes to him. It's about you feeling that you have to hide it from me for some reason. You're my sister. I'm going to worry about you especially if you're gonna start hanging around Billy Hargrove now. Don't get fucking pissed at me for reacting negatively to something that you *chose* to avoid mentioning when I wanted to make plans with you." Robin finished, before looking at the clock on their wall and pulling her bag closer to her.

"Whatever.. I've gotta go." She began to leave.

"Do you not need a ride?" Wren simply said and Robin rolled her eyes.

"Don't bother. I'll bike there today. Have fun at the pool I guess." And with that, she had left.

Wren continued to sit on the bed in silence for a few long seconds, feeling tears welling up in her eyes.

Robin hardly ever got that angry at her. It usually took a lot for the two to actually argue over something and they'd never argued over

the company that they were keeping or the friends that they had.

It hadn't ever been a problem before because Robin's friends were Wren's friends and vice-versa.

Wren knew that Robin was more defensive whenever it came to who they hung out with; she took the mean comments from people like Carol seriously and basically vowed to not hang out with those kinds of people because she felt like they had no value or respect for themselves.

Wren understood that but she was bothered by the fact that Robin didn't put more trust in her when it came to how she was going to be spending her afternoon today.

Yes, Billy could be reckless at times but he hadn't gone out of his way to put her in any danger other than flinging her into a pool a few days ago.

Even then, it was kind of funny to think back to. She didn't have a whole lot of moments like that in her life where her adrenaline was pumping like it had been in that moment.

Whenever Robin had left Wren to her own thoughts she wished that her sister would come back almost as soon as she had left. She hated when they argued.

Instead of sitting around and moping, she knew it was time to start getting ready for the pool since she had to be there in about an hour so Wren wiped away at any stray tears pooling in her eyes and she got up to face what was to come today.

o-o-o

Wren was re-tying her hair from the bun she had thrown it into for work.

It was pretty hot today and the pool shift was flying by.

She wasn't sure if it was because of the fact that she couldn't stop worrying about her argument with Robin or hanging out with Billy today or if it was just luck.

Probably the first option.

She was on watch right now, her eyes traveling along the perimeter of the pool per usual to make sure that nobody was being stupid.

Heather wasn't working today but Billy and Kelly and a few others were.

Kelly was watching after the kiddie pool and Billy was taking his break.

Wren's eyes had eventually narrowed when she heard a group of women laughing to the side, looking over and seeing that Billy was standing there and talking to the mothers who typically lounged around and observed everything.. especially him.

She pushed her sunglasses further up her nose as they slid down whenever she had been fixing her hair.

Billy's tan skin was covered in a sheen of sweat, but rather than it making him look gross, it made his skin almost.. glow.

His hair was hardly ever seemed to be affected by the summer humidity due to the fact that it was decently curly and sometimes frizzy already so Billy Hargrove looked undeniably good.

She hated that he used that to his advantage.

She couldn't relate to having confidence like that nor could Wren fathom a reality where she would ever be that way.

A part of her was jealous of how he carried himself and was unphased by what others thought about him.

It didn't matter what they did think; people wanted him anyways even if he could be a total dick.

The women he had taken to having a conversation with were reveling in his attention and she noticed how Billy's attention mostly seemed to focus on Mrs. Wheeler.

She knew about his interest for the adult but Wren hadn't ever really

sat and watched him and his behavior while he interacted with them.

He had a toothpick in his mouth, the small piece of wood fiddling between his teeth as he sent a toothy and charming smile to them but his eyes seemed to linger on Mrs. Wheeler the longest.

It wasn't a new or strange sight to her but she experienced an outlook on him that she hadn't noticed before.. he was *trying* very hard to play it cool around Mrs. Wheeler.

It wasn't visible to her from where she was watching but Billy's eyes were wandering aimlessly along the curves of the slim mother resting in the shade.

She was fully done up: her blonde hair teased and curled, her lips painted pink and the blush brushed onto her cheeks hid any real color that may have risen while she tried to spot if Billy was reciprocating any kind of remote interest for her.

Billy wondered if she purposely put that much effort into her appearance every time he saw her here just for him.

Wren felt some feeling wash over her; not jealousy, but disbelief.

He really enjoyed getting reactions out of people.. even if they were twice his age.

Wren looked away after a few seconds of observation when the sound of a child shrieking took her attention from him, but it was just a few younger kids playing around and splashing one another.

She let out a sigh, slumping a bit in the uncomfortable seat and leaning back against it.

Her thoughts had wandered back to how this afternoon was going to go with Billy; he told her not to dress up or anything so she packed some shorts, a tee, and some converse. It was a standard go-to for her.

It made Wren nervous to think too much on it and luckily she hadn't been thinking for too long when a few teenagers started being rough and were trying to play chicken.

She harshly blew the whistle and immediately caught their attention.

"Cut it out! You know the rules."

They stopped reluctantly and she didn't have to say anything else so her eyes began to wander around the pool and she was simply being nosy to distract herself from the dead boredom of sitting up on the seat.

A few minutes had passed and it was now Billy's time to take watch.

The teenager was right on time with the shift change.

He was usually pretty timely now which Wren was thankful for given the fact that sitting here got old real fast.

"God, you're my hero. I was seriously starting to get bored." Wren admitted in a joking tone as she grabbed her water and began down the latter.

"I don't think you've ever been this happy to see me." Billy remarked as he toyed around with the toothpick between his lips, his eyes squinted some from the brightness of the sun blasting down on them.

"So my sister is here and I've gotta take her home after this. Figured I'd let ya know because it isn't an option for me not to." Billy explained distastefully as he looked to the side and Wren's eyes followed.

There was a young red headed teenage girl sitting on a beach towel with a boy that she often saw hanging out with Nancy Wheeler's brother right next to her.

Wren wasn't really sure what his name was but she'd seen him around a lot before and she assumed they were the same age. He had an arm around her shoulders.

The two had been looking over at them for a few seconds and his sister noticed.

The smile on her face faded into something.. strange.

Almost challenging as she met eyes with Billy and raised a brow.

His brows knotted closer together as anger flashed in his eyes and his fists clenched at his sides before he looked away.

Seeing Max with Lucas made his blood boil like it never has before.

It was absolute shit that she was free to do whatever she wanted and to be friends with whoever and that she didn't have to worry about keeping connections that she made with the people around her.

She was friends with a bunch of nerdy boys and Billy knew that if he had any friends worth a damn that his father would drive them away before anything worthwhile came of it.

"Wow, could you look any more enthused than you do right now?" Wren stated as Billy climbed up the ladder and sat down.

She was a bit thrown off by the sudden change of his attitude; he seemed fine when he was talking to the group of women but now he seemed angry over something.

"I could but I don't fuckin' want to." Billy snapped, grabbing the toothpick from his mouth and tossing it to the side opposite from which Wren was standing of next to the chair.

She looked up at him but couldn't see much of his face.

"Is that her boyfriend that you were talking about?"

"Yeah." He gruffly answered, suddenly seeming very interested in the people who were swimming in the pool.

"What's his name again? I don't think you mentioned it the first time you talked about them."

Silence fell over them and Wren frowned as she grew a little concerned by the bitter vibe she was receiving on his end of the conversation.

"..Billy?"

"Lucas... Sinclair." He muttered out slowly, his patience wearing thin.

She chewed at her bottom lip as she considered how the conversation was turning.

Billy seemed extremely reluctant to answer her questions but he did anyways so she decided to stray away from the topic of Max's boyfriend for Billy's sake.

Wren finished up the last of her water and she pursed her lips before she changed the subject.

"Uh- yeah no it doesn't bother me that you have to take her home. But I need more water so I'm gonna go grab one, do you need one?" She asked him, noticing that he wasn't carrying one around with him.

When he replied with a simple "yeah", Wren walked away from him, knowing he was checked out of the conversation now.

As she made her way over to concession she couldn't help but wonder what exactly it was about Lucas that made Billy so angry.

The only connection that she could make without a direct explanation from Billy was the fact that the teenager was African American, but surely that wasn't why Billy was acting so pissy about him,.. was it?

There were people in Hawkins who did not care to hide their discriminatory nature so it didn't necessarily shock Wren. It did piss her off though.

Something about that possibility really rubbed Wren the wrong way and it bothered her.

It would explain why Billy avoided talking about Lucas but she ultimately decided to not dwell on it for too long right now and to ask him about it later rather than making assumptions.

She opened the door to concession and grabbed two waters from the cooler and made her way back over to hand it to him, this time not saying a word to him and him not saying anything to her even as she began to walk away.

o-o-o

Once the lifeguards had finished cleaning up and turning everything off, Wren had changed into her clothes and made her way outside.

She looked around and saw that Max was standing near the exit, her arms crossed over her chest as she leaned against the wall.

Wren made her way over to her and sent her a smile, "Max, right?"

"..yeah?"

"I'm Wren Buckley. Billy's talked about you to me a few times, we're coworkers."

The once confused look on Max's face turned into one of exasperation and realization.

A sigh slipped from the girls' lips and her eyes narrowed, her arms crossed over her chest.

"Oooh. Billy? Nice." Max simply said, distaste in her tone as she pushed her hair away from her eyes by tucking it behind her ears.

Max was open to having a conversation with this girl before she realized that this was probably just some other person that he was screwing around with and frankly.. Max had absolutely no interest in getting to know the girls that Billy "hung out" with.

There had already been too many, Max lost track a few months ago and really didn't care what he did in his free time. It was gross.

Wren noticed the awkward tension falling over them and knew what Max was thinking just by the tone of her voice.

"We *just* work together." Wren established, letting out a laugh as she fiddled with the keys of her car.

Max looked back to Wren and raised her eyebrows, not sure whether to believe her or not and her cheeks reddened as she suddenly felt kind of awkward and bad for assuming things.

"Sorry. I'm just really used to Billy having random girls around." Max admitted sheepishly, "He got really pissy at me earlier when I told him I needed a ride home. Our parents go out a lot so he's usually my ride." The girl explained.

"It's fine, honestly. I'm gonna be tagging along with you guys, I guess.. but it isn't like that." Wren explained, knowing the words sounded a little strange and that she kept contradicting herself.

"It isn't?" Max questioned, amusement laced in her voice.

Max couldn't decide how she felt about this conversation; it was confusing.

Billy didn't spend time with girls to bond with them, they messed around and that was it.

Even though she was confused, she got a different vibe from this conversation compared to the short-lived ones that she's had with the other people who hang around him and she didn't mind Wren so far.

"Nope." Wren grinned as she popped the "p" in the simple answer, hearing a door open.

The two looked over and saw that Billy was finished changing and was making his way over to them, his walk cool and collected but he had that stern look on his face that was always there.

His hair was damp as it usually was. It was a familiar sight to her saying that they worked at a pool.

He typically went for the same outfit when he clocked out of work which was a white wife beater tank and some light-wash jeans since he knew it was something he looked good in and he wouldn't be caught dead leaving this place in a t-shirt and athletic shorts like Eric would.

Instead of the tank he was wearing a white v-neck but other than that nothing was out of the ordinary.

"Great, you two have met. Plotting my demise?" Billy huffed as he walked past the two, motioning for them to follow.

He had his car keys in his hand and Wren could tell that he was ready to get out of here.

"I'd say yes but if I did it would ruin my mastermind plan. An evil genius never gives away their secrets." Wren replied, tucking her car keys in her pocket once she realized that her car was going to be useless tonight.

Maybe she should've rode her bike to work today..

Wren hadn't noticed but an amused smile made its way onto Max's lips as she trailed behind the two.

She kind of liked Wren and the way she joked with Billy like that. Max hadn't seen him with a girl before who didn't seem to want to jump his bones or was scared of him.

She was joking with him and lots of people didn't do that, not even Max most of the time because he would get ticked if she said a few wrong words and he was usually pretty mean to her and an absolute control freak about anything she did.

He was unpredictable and verbally abusive when he was angry and Max didn't like that explosive side of his personality.

Max always got angry at Billy for the way he acted and how he treated her but she knew that her step-brother had to deal with something that she hadn't been around before her mom got married to his dad..

"Evil genius? That's a fuckin' riot, Buckley." Billy remarked, a smirk on his lips as they approached his Camaro and he unlocked the driver's side, reaching across to the passenger side and unlocking that door, too.

Wren assumed she was going to sit in the back so she began to shift the front seat so she could climb back, but Billy's harsh voice stopped her in the middle of it.

"What're you doing? Max, sit your ass in the back." Billy started the car, the engine revving to life.

"I really don't care to sit in the back, it's fi-" Wren began, but Billy interrupted her.

"Max." Billy simply pressed on, eyes annoyingly glaring out the windshield.

Wren stared at him for a few seconds, a frown forming over her face before she sighed and stepped away so that Max could hop inside.

Max glared angrily at him before she huffed out a sassy breath of air, shoving her way into the small backseat of the car and pulling up the front seat so that Wren could sit down.

Wren closed the door and set her backpack down and Billy was looking at himself through the rear view mirror for a few seconds, eyes flickering back to his sister as she began to buckle her seat belt.

"You may wanna buckle up.." Max warned. Wren took her word for it and quickly began to reach for the buckle.

A knowing smirk was on Billy's face as he rolled the windows down and loud rock music began to blast through the speakers and her ears once he set up the tape.

Wren had barely managed to hear the affirming "*click*" of the seat belt locking in to place by the time the vehicle lurched back in reverse.

Billy was impressively quick to shift the gear into drive and to zoom out of the pool parking lot within a few short seconds.

Wren could feel her stomach lurch as the muscle car immediately reacted to the speed Billy was demanding for it to travel at.

She couldn't believe that she was actually in this stupid blue camaro that she made fun of him for driving around like a maniac in.

And she really couldn't wrap her head around the fact that *she* was now one of those girls who could say they've been in this passenger seat beside of him.

o-o-o

The drive to Billy's house hadn't taken that long and Max had barely managed to grab her things and climb out of the car by the time Billy had started zooming forward on the road again.

The girl flipped her step-brother off angrily as he drove away, Wren's eyes catching it in the rear-view mirror and she laughed.

"Wow, your sister really can't stand you, can she?"

"The feeling's mutual." Billy grumbled as he lit a cigarette and puffed out a long stream of smoke, the white billows gliding past his lips and out of his nose effortlessly. "Kid's a goddamn brat."

"Gee, ever wondered who she got it from?" Wren remarked over the loud music as she rolled down her window some, the warm summer air relieving her of breathing in most of the second-hand smoke he was suffocating her with. The statement was obviously a joke saying that they were only step-siblings but it was still a good jab to his ego and that was good enough for her.

"I like her." Wren smiled.

She hadn't looked at Billy when she said that but the older boy's jaw muscles tightened under his skin and his hold on the wheel turned his knuckles a bit whiter than they already had been.

"Soo.. where are we going anyways?" Wren asked as Billy drove past the array of smaller houses.

He lived in the part of town that wasn't as suburban as the rest. The houses were more humble and not as large like the ones in Wren's neighborhood but he also hadn't been living here for very long either.

"Anyone ever told you that you talk too much, Buckley?"

"I think so but I can't really remember because I was talking while they said it." She joked casually, resting her arm out of the window and enjoying the nice nighttime weather.

He was still driving at a quick speed and it made her nervous as hell but she had grown used to it after being in the vehicle with him for twenty minutes.

"I have a reason to ask. You wanted to hang out so badly. Well, here we are. Where are we going?" She asked again, looking over at the boy.

The orange gleam from the streetlights was shining through the car and lit the pair up.

It gave Wren the perfect opportunity to let the situation sink in all over again and to realize who she was with tonight.

She absentmindedly seemed to be watching him as he coolly smoked through the loud blast of music radiating around them.

He didn't say anything but he could feel her eyes on him but he ignored it; staring was something that did not bother him whatsoever.

He turned down the music earlier when he dropped off Max because it was the evening and he didn't want to deal with any neighbors being pissy about his music again and telling his dad about it.

Personal experience and the outcome for Billy fucking sucked.

He might've turned it down but it was still loud enough to where Wren felt the need to talk a little louder than she normally did.

Billy didn't do anything but finish off the last of the cigarette as he pulled into a parking lot for a small diner.

He tossed it out of the window, breathing out the remnants of it as he parked before he looked to his right at her.

"Arrived to the destination. Satisfied, princess?"

Wren chewed the inside of her cheek at the pet name before she quickly unbuckled her seat belt and began to step out of the car.

"Not sure why I'm so surprised. Why here?" Wren asked as she followed suit behind him as they walked inside once the vehicle was turned off.

It was a cute little place but it was old, too. Wren had eaten here a

few times throughout her life but it wasn't anything she remembered too well.

"Thought I'd make it up to ya for raiding your ice cream the other day. You took it a little too personally." Billy remarked in an amused tone as they chose to sit at booth, facing one another.

"Too personally? I'm sorry that I got angry over you tonguing *my* ice cream spoon that I was using to eat." Wren shot back as she glared down at the menu in front of her and opened it a bit too harshly.

"Tonguing? You make it sound so fun."

"Ugh, that's gross."

"That? Oh, that was nothing.."

Billy's eyes watched her attentively as she suddenly seemed very focused on what she wanted and she chose not to say anything else.

The whole situation was different for the both of them; Billy hadn't been here with anybody other than Max and that was to pick up food, not to dine in.

Wren wasn't exactly the type of girl that Billy normally went for and that was what interested him more than anything.

She makes him so fucking angry when she mocks him but a part of him enjoys the fire and the heat of their conversations.

It was exciting to him. In a small town like this, Billy struggled to find things that got his adrenaline pumping so he resorted to doing stupid shit like fighting Harrington for kicks, fucking around with girls, or (as of recently) picking arguments with Wren.

An older waitress approached the both of them and asked what they wanted to drink. Wren ordered a water and Billy got a plain black coffee.

Figures, only maniacs can drink their coffee like that...

"Yanno this isn't a date, don't ya?" Billy questioned, not bothering to

pick up the menu because he knew what he wanted. She was the one trying to decide.

The teenager glanced up from the menu and raised a curious brow towards him.

"Honestly, Billy? I didn't know what the hell you meant when you asked me to hang out. You were so vague and demanding about it, you barely even gave me the option to say no."

Billy had an amused shine in his eyes as the waitress set down the drinks and asked if they were ready to order.

"Burger and fries. No onions." Billy went first, giving Wren a few seconds to finalize what she wanted.

"Uh.. I'll just have bacon and eggs with home fries." Wren smiled at the woman.

Billy took the two menus and handed it to the employee, his attention not breaking from the girl in front of him.

"You've got the option to say no, doll. I'm not a complete fuckin' jerk." Billy chuckled and Wren leaned back in her seat, folding her arms across her chest.

"You sure about that?" Wren responded.

The amused expression on his face contorted into something more serious and she hadn't given him much time to say anything before she spoke again.

"I'm just kidding. I know what you mean. You're just *usually* a jerk.. but not always." She teased. "Why do you do that, anyways?"

"Do what?" Billy asked her as he took a drink from the coffee cup, his other arm resting lazily on the table.

"I can tell that some things about you are *you* but I can also tell that other things aren't. Why do you put on that scary front around here when you started fresh when you moved here from California?"

"It isn't a front. Yeah.. sure, partying and fucking around is fun and all but it has no substance. it's all a bunch of bullshit to pass the time away until I get the hell out of here." He explained as he took another drink.

She was happy he was actually having a conversation with her and wasn't dodging like he normally did.

"God I know what you mean." She huffed out a breath of air as she grabbed her cup and took a sip of the water. "Hawkins is okay and all but I go stir crazy. If I didn't have Robin, I'd go insane."

"The trip down the rabbit hole isn't so bad, Buckley. the chaos is exhilarating." Billy smirked as he put down the coffee.

Both arms were now on the table; he leant forward ever so slightly.

"What d'ya know about chaos? What kind of secrets have you got?" He prodded playfully but his words held some sort of underlying tone of seduction.

Wren fidgeted a little in her seat.

"Me?" She laughed. "Literally no secrets. No parties before I went to Heather's the other night so I have no baggage or drunk stories to tell."

"Shit, are you gonna tell me that you've never dated anybody, too?"

"Oh come on, of course I have. I mean- yeah I've dated two boys but it really wasn't anything special." Wren explained.

"Don't expect it to be. Dating is a waste of effort." Billy muttered, eyes flickering toward the side as somebody who just walked in passed by them and sat at one of the stools near the bar.

"Sheesh, that sounded like some personal experience you've stored away. What's the story behind that?" She asked curiously.

Billy didn't say anything for several seconds as his eyes met with hers and he shrugged carelessly.

"No story." He coolly brushed her off.

"Really? You're going to sit there and lie about it?"

"Yeah, I fucking am. Can't you get the goddamn hint that it's none of your business, Buckley?" Billy aggressively replied; his voice didn't raise, it stayed quiet.

"...so there is something." Wren stated after a long moment of silence, her eyes watching him as he rolled his own and leaned back into the booth seat.

"You just don't quit, do ya?" He muttered, clearly annoyed with the situation as he gazed out the window.

She decided to change the subject to herself since he didn't seem to enjoy explaining things about himself.

"I went to homecoming with my first boyfriend. We dated for like a week then we broke up because he was dating somebody else, too." She explained, a small laugh sounding from her. "It was stupid. But the second one meant something." She admitted, more serious now.

Billy had averted his attention back to her, eyes not leaving her.

"I was with him for like.. I don't know. Six months or so sophomore year." She admitted, chewing her bottom lip for a few moments before she started again.

"It was nice. We were both in choir and we really clicked but that.. kind of faded after a while. The compatibility didn't matter. We were both bored with things. It felt too.. too..?" She stuttered with her wording.

"Safe?" Billy guessed and she nodded.

"Yeah.. safe." She sighed, arms across her chest again as she was now the one to look out the window.

"Had a girlfriend in Cali. We were seeing each other for about a year behind my dad's back."

Wren curiously gazed at Billy, her eyebrows raising.

"Ooh, a secret girlfriend? Can't say that I'm surprised but when have you ever been secretive about girls?"

"I'm not, not really anyways." Billy frowned, a look of slight frustration on his face as he considered what he wanted to say.

He'd never told anybody about this before and he wasn't sure if he was ready to.

There was a reason why he kept avoiding the subject everytime Wren got her nose too deep into things.

"Then why were you with her secretly?"

"She was black." He simply said, words hardly revealing what was going on in his head. "And normally that wouldn't matter but my dad is a racist piece of shit." Billy admitted, tempted to look around to make sure that his father wasn't here, even though Billy knew he wasn't.

Wren went silent for awhile, realization setting in and her eyes softened. "Oh."

"Hah.. yeah. 'oh'" Billy remarked but his words weren't sarcastic or mimicking. He was serious this time.

"He found out and things got shitty and I couldn't see her anymore. He took my car away and I didn't really leave the house unless it was for school.. few weeks later he proposed to Max's mom. Got hitched and decided to move to the middle of no where and dragged my ass along with him."

"Is.. is that why you don't like Max's boyfriend?" Wren asked slowly, words hesitated.

Billy wasn't sure how to answer that, he wasn't expecting her to shoot it at him and to be that straight forward.

"I'm not gonna like any boy that goes near Max. But uh.. I talked to her awhile ago about how she shouldn't drag him in to what we have

to deal with when it comes to my dad. Frankly, she didn't give a shit." Billy grew angered as he explained but kept his cool.

"And my dad doesn't give a rat's ass either about who Max is around. I guess in the moment I was trying to protect her but it gets me when I realize I can't have that freedom, too." He finished talking about Max.

"It's always been about me to him. What I do, who my friends are, who I fuck around with. He cares *soo* goddamn much but apparently has a twisted way of showing it." Billy sneered.

"I had no idea it was like that for you." Wren admitted, causing Billy to chuckle bitterly.

"That's the point, Buckley. Shit sucks with my dad." He admitted. All of a sudden, Billy felt more nervous and hesitant in this conversation than he has in any other confrontation he's been in.

Although opening up about his past scared the hell out of him and made him uncomfortable, there was a weight lifted off of his shoulders knowing that he finally told somebody about a small part of what he has to deal with back home.

Billy's life changed when he couldn't talk to his ex anymore. He never truly found the will to hate his father but after that... let's just say that Billy shut himself away from the possibility of having a dad ever again after that horse shit went down.

Neither of them said anything for a little bit but they didn't have to because the waitress brought them their food and set it on the table.

The two began to eat, still not saying anything as they both realized how hungry they really were after the pool shift today.

Once she had finished most of her eggs and Billy was halfway through with the burger, she decided to speak up again.

"I'm sorry for always shitting on you for not talking to me about stuff. I understood in a way why you wouldn't want to but I had no idea it was that serious." She admitted through a bite of bacon.

"Forget about it, it doesn't mean anything." Billy reassured and brushed it off, his words not sarcastic this time around but sincere in nature.

"My life is kind of a pile of shit. Haven't you noticed yet?" Billy remarked darkly, a grin on his face as he popped a fry into his mouth.

"No, actually. You play it off well." Wren playfully replied, taking a drink from her water. "I could learn from you."

Billy's grin turned into a smirk.

"You *could* learn a lot from me. Get in line, doll."

"I can't believe I'm sitting in a diner with you, munching on breakfast and talking about our traumas." Wren giggled as she shook her head, finishing off a piece of bacon.

"I thought this was going to suck, not gonna lie. And my sister is totally pissed at me for being here with you instead of seeing a movie with her, but this is actually kinda nice." The words absentmindedly slipped from her mouth as she continued to eat.

Billy looked at her and frowned.

"Pissed at you? why?"

"She thought this was a date or whatever. I kept telling her it wasn't but she didn't believe me." Wren explained.

"I told her I didn't really have a choice but she didn't listen so we argued right before she left to go to work." Her words seemed to grow more aware and she began to get a little sad.

"Shit, she doesn't like me?" He joked, his words not caring at all but he was keeping conversation.

"Of course not. She's worse when it comes to being judgmental about people than I am so you can imagine how that went."

"Do you wish that you went with her instead?"

"In some ways, yeah. But that's because it's Robin and she's my best friend." Wren fiddled with a piece of egg on her plate that she didn't eat with her fork.

"It's kinda cool just talking to you though and you not getting all hot headed over every little thing I say or ask you about." Wren glanced at him, meeting eyes with Billy and sending him a small smile.

"So no. I don't wish that I went with her instead. I think I made the right decision."

8. Ch 8 -The Sunglasses Dilemma

Last night with Billy actually ended on a really good note.

They ate their food and he took Wren back to the pool parking lot so that she could take her car home.

He even paid for her food; it was cheap but he said it was to make up for the stolen "Scoops Ahoy" ice cream.

They didn't talk anymore about his past or his ex-girlfriend but she didn't mind, she understood why he wouldn't want to and was happy enough that he even trusted her enough to tell her about that.

She wondered if Billy had opened up like that to anybody else around here. Tommy, maybe?

Something was telling her no.

When she got home things were a little awkward.

Robin got home after Wren. She had a small bucket of leftover popcorn from the movie she went to go watch, alone, and Wren wanted to ask what she saw but the tension in the air was bad.

Robin clearly didn't want to speak to Wren; she was still holding a grudge from the argument that they had earlier that evening.

They went to bed yesterday without saying a single word to one another.

For the sisters, that was almost unheard of.

Now it was the next day and Wren was working again.

It was her job today to go around and check the filters and let Eric know about anything that might need fixed but everything was in the clear.

She had to fish out a few leaves and a *lot* of bugs from the water (which by the way.. gross).

It was also miserably warm out. The sun was beating down and clouds were hardly in the forecast.. the pool was going to be busy today with a lot of people hoping to catch some rays from the sun.

People had started filtering in when Wren was filling up her canteen with some water. She found it stored away in one of their pantries in the kitchen where they keep all of their mugs and shit and decided she could put some use to it.

She hated using so many water bottles while she was here so refilling this would help a lot.

Heather and Billy were watching the main pool first and Wren got to watch after the kiddie pool which was great because lots of little kids and their families didn't get here until later on in the morning.

As the cold water from the fountain filled the metal container, Wren heard a loud car pull into the parking lot.

She looked over, having a clear view of the parking lot from where she was.

Billy stepped out of his Camaro wearing a pair of dark sunglasses over his face and already changed into his trunks and a white tank, carrying his change of clothes in his hand.

Wren didn't look at him for too long before she finished filling up the canteen and she screwed the lid on.

"Hey Billy. You've got first watch." Wren replied as she turned around just as he approached her. Instead of saying anything to her, Billy just kept walking forward.

A frown creased on her face as she watched him keep walking and turn towards (where she assumed was) the men's locker room.

"Um.. okay?" Wren muttered to herself, slightly confused by the one-sided interaction.

Was today going to be one of those days..?

She hoped not. She actually preferred when Billy was willing to talk

to her; she found that she enjoyed their conversations when he wasn't being difficult and bitter for no reason.

A little over half an hour had passed of Wren being at the kiddie pool when the lifeguards working today were switching rounds.

Wren watched as Heather climbed down the elevated white seat and made her way over to Billy.

The boy was off today.

He'd hardly said a word to anybody, didn't give two shits if people were breaking the rules, and didn't seem too happy about Heather trying to speak to him.

She was extra bubbly today, her brown locks in the high ponytail bouncing behind her as she walked and her stride casually confident.

She didn't seem phased by whatever Billy said in response to her words, she just nodded and smiled happily (or flirtatiously..? Not sure. with Heather it's hard to tell) and made her way over to Wren.

"Hey chick. Billy's gonna stay over there and you and I can switch this round." Heather smiled, leaning against the white-painted wooden panels of the seat.

Wren nodded and got up, climbing down from the seat.

"Heather? Does Billy seem kind of.. weird today?" Wren curiously asked, a bit of worry laced in her tone.

"Not really? That's just how he is. Sometimes Billy comes in to work in like a really bad mood but I never ask him about it." Heather admitted.

The girl was confused.. was there something actually wrong with Billy, or was Wren being overly paranoid?

"Why, did he say something to you?" Heather prodded, wanting in on whatever was going on, especially if it came to Billy.

"No, if anything it's the fact that he didn't say anything to me that

worried me." Wren admitted, chewing her bottom lip for a few moments before she sent a sheepish smile to her coworker.

"It's probably nothing." Wren finally said.

"Yeah. He could've been out late last night at some party or something and he's hungover or whatever." Heather giggled as she took her seat at the station.

Wren pursed her lips, raising her brows as she aimlessly looked in Billy's direction.

"Uhh.. oh, yeah. I'm sure that's what it is. I gotta head over though, I'll talk to you in a few." Wren casually stated before she padded off to take watch.

As she took a drink from her bottle she realized that no one really knew that she hung out with Billy last night.

She figured it would be really hard to explain to Heather that her and Billy didn't go out on a date.. she just carpooled with him.. to a diner.. and he paid for dinner.

They were kind-of friends and they talked, nothing more. What's the harm in that?

When it comes to Billy Hargrove, there's probably a ton of harm in that.

Mixing together Billy, small town girls and women in Hawkins that fawned over him and rumors about him and Wren hanging out?

Oh God... she'd be damned to gossip hell.

The questions and snarky remarks would be never ending.

No thanks. Wren chose to keep it a secret from everybody, excluding her sister and parents.

A part of her wished that she hadn't mentioned it to Robin. Maybe then her sister would actually be speaking to her right now.

o-o-o

A few hours had passed by and things were going as they normally did.

People were swimming and having fun and Wren and the other lifeguards were chilling in their assigned watch spots.

Things had started to get very boring at one point though.

Wren had tried just about everything to keep from nodding off; the heat from the sun and the shade from the umbrella set for a pretty relaxing atmosphere for her, which was bad considering that she was supposed to be looking after people.

To keep herself from completely phasing out from what was going on in the pool, Wren tried a multitude of things.

She counted backwards from one hundred, hummed made-up melodies in her head, counted how many people walked up to concession and ordered food, hell, she even counted the amount of moms laying along the sides tanning.

No one ever really talked about how *boring* being a lifeguard could be.

Wren was counting down the last few minutes of this watch shift because it was her last one before she got her half hour break.

As her eyes wandered around the pool perimeter, the atmosphere shifted immediately.

"Help!" A shrill voice called out; a little girl in pool floaties no older than 5 or 6 screamed. She was standing outside of the pool, pointing towards the water.

She was on the other side of the pool and before Wren could really process what was going on, she was already standing and ready to dive in.

Her eyes traveled frantically along the waters of the pool but she couldn't see what the child was pointing at.. not at first.

By the time Wren spotted the person under the water, Billy had already dived into the surface of the pool.

It seemed like minutes had passed by when in actuality only a few seconds had by the time Billy resurfaced with a young boy in his arms.

Wren and several others including lifeguards and swimmers ran over to the scene, but it didn't seem to phase Billy.

The teenager had swiftly placed the child on his back and was giving him chest compressions; within thirty seconds, the young boy coughed up the water that got into his system.

His mother was there, on her knees and crying and had hardly given him much time to process what was going on when she grabbed him and hugged him tightly to her chest.

Wren hadn't noticed, but her heart was pounding within her chest as she watched the two embrace.

This has happened a few times already, but she hasn't had to do it herself yet. She hasn't seen Billy have to, either. But they were all required to be CPR certified to get hired so in the case of something like this happening, they were all supposed to be prepared.

Billy was also on his knees, drawing in a few sharp breaths but his demeanor was still calm and collected; throughout the entire situation, he kept his composure in a frighteningly impressive way.

His eyes were attentively focused on the mother and child, droplets of water cascading along his skin and his hair drenched.

His sunglasses were gone and Wren felt a wave of confusion fall over and temporarily replace her attention from what just happened.

On Billy's face was a swirl of light brown and medium purples blossoming on the skin between his left eye and his cheekbone.

She hadn't seen it before..

Then she realized why. Billy had been wearing his sunglasses this

entire shift, preventing anybody from noticing it before now.

She felt a sudden sense of concern as she stood there, wondering if this wasn't the first time that he's done this.

She took her attention away from Billy and began to comfort the mother, offering to let them go sit in the employee area for a few minutes to recover while they waited for an ambulance to come by.

Worry for Billy had faded for awhile after that entire incident but eventually Eric told Wren to go back to her watch while he stayed with the victim and his mother.

The air was tense for about a half hour for the pool residents but that gradually drifted off and the children began to play again, the mothers were tanning and the lifeguards were keeping their watch.

But Wren couldn't shake off her nerves caused by everything that just happened..

The child was safe and was in medical watch now and that was relieving for her. If Billy hadn't been so quick to react to everything she wasn't sure what would've happened.

Now she was worried about Billy, too.

How did he manage to get a black eye between last night and now?

It bothered her, especially saying that it now explained his off-putting attitude.

No wonder he didn't want to speak anybody. She wouldn't want to, either.

O-O-O

"Hey Billy, nice work earlier today. Just wanted to let you guys know that I checked in with the hospital and the boy is fine. They ran a few check-ups on him and they said you got to him just in time. Nice work, man." Wren overheard Eric say as she cleaned the pool with the net.

Billy had just finished corralling all of the guests out when Eric approached him.

"Thanks. Glad the kid's okay." Billy's deep voice responded before his eyes traveled in Wren's direction, the sunglasses back on his face.

He'd worn them almost the entire day to keep from people asking him annoying questions about what happened.

No one noticed, not even when he had to give chest compressions to the kid that he rescued.

Billy was glad that everything turned out okay but he figured some shit like that had to go down today after the night he had back at home.

He picked up any trash laying around and took out the garbage and by the time he had finished with that, he went into the locker room to rinse off and change.

Billy was trying his best to avoid feeling anything today. He knew that all it would take is one wrong move or question and he'd get fucking pissed.

As he showered, he felt his muscles tensing and then relaxing constantly as the unsteady stream of water beat against his tanned skin.

He brushed his hair back with both of his hands and closed his eyes as he took in a deep breath then huffed it out. He did this a few times, the pressure of his eyes being closed increasing and his breathing pace picking up.

The small space around him seemed to feel smaller and smaller to him and he could feel the adrenaline in his system spike and his nerves grow more reactive.

The thoughts were getting to him again. The feelings. The hurt.

Billy took a few more seconds to let himself gain some composure before his eyes quickly opened and he angrily shut off the water.

He can't let those thoughts control him.

He can't let his father run his life.

Not today.

Not any day.

Black eye or not, he wasn't going to mope around about a fucking shiner.

He's dealt with way worse, this was nothing.

That's what he was telling himself anyways.. but why did it feel so different this time?

As Billy dried off and got dressed, he considered this.

He had a decent night with Wren. He got to be himself around her more than he has with anybody else in this goddamn town the entire time he's been living here.

Frankly, he would've said he had a good time last night if it hadn't been for what happened when he got home.

His dad was there, waiting for him in the living room.

Just his dad. Max and her mom were in their rooms, probably waiting for the chaos to ensue..

and it did.

His dad immediately pelted him with questions like "where did you go?", "what where were you fucking around with today?", and "You left Max here by herself".

Billy had told his dad he was going out already but his dad was drunk.. and when he got drunk he was always so angry. Angrier than usual. He forgot all rational thinking and purely sought out ways to take his anger out on his son.

It didn't matter if Billy answered his father or not, he was met with

the same response.

He was shoved against the wall, pushed around and things were thrown at him.

He managed to avoid the punches up until a point when the teenager was caught at a bad timing when he was recovering from a dodge and his dad hit him square in the cheek, barely missing his eye.

Neil added in a few more hits, just for good measure.

Billy wasn't grounded, his keys weren't taken away.. he was just driven off to his room.

He couldn't blast his music; he didn't dare do that when his dad was home. He didn't call up some random chick and try to sneak out.

Fuck, Billy didn't even cry.

He just sat on the end of his bed, jaw clenched and muscles straining as he eyed a photograph in his wallet of him and his mom.

He wondered why he wasn't with her or why he wasn't good enough for her to stay.

Despite the thoughts swirling about his mind, he didn't convey it.

He sat there for what felt like an hour, maybe two on his bed.

He thought about his mom. California. His ex. The smell of the beach and how it felt to actually have saltwater against his skin and not the over filtered piss water from Hawkins' public pool.

It hadn't even been a year yet but it felt like it was so long ago.

Billy hadn't noticed it but he had his locker opened and was just standing there, staring into it for fuck knows how long as he wondered.

He slammed the door shut and grabbed his things once he was changed and left the locker room but he was met with a familiar pair of eyes.

"Hey. You doing okay,..?" Wren asked, holding the pool keys in her hand. It must've just been them.

He hadn't bothered putting the sunglasses back on since it was sunset now and he was leaving anyways but he kind of regretted it when he realized he was being approached by her now.

His eyes quickly took in her appearance like they always did when he first sees her.

She had her hair down; it was messy and a little frizzy but it was cute in a Wren kind of way. It suited her.

She had on a "*Wang Chung*" t-shirt and a pair of jean shorts and her flip flops. Wasn't trying so hard like other people did from this area.

"Yeah. Totally cool. Why you askin'?" Billy replied as he began to walk, expecting her to trail after him.. and she did.

"Just figured I would see if you're okay after the whole.. yanno. Child drowning thing. You really handled that well." She began and was quick to start up the next part of her statement when she began to lock the gates but he kept walking.

"Hey Billy, hold on." She firmly said, and he wouldn't have stopped any other time but her voice was stern and it was a bit off-putting; she wasn't usually stern with the way she talked.

He let out a deep, cool breath of air as he rolled his eyes and froze in place, his back turned to her before he turned around to look at her.

"What?" He snapped, the word coming out hateful but it didn't bother her. It was typical Billy speak.

"Don't think that you're getting away so fast. C'mere. I gotta show you something." Wren motioned for him to follow her and she opened the creaky door to the employee area/ticket booth.

The wording of Wren's phrase definitely intrigued the boy. "I gotta show you something"? Not exactly a saying he was used to hearing casually.

Billy closed the door behind them as she moved over to the cooler and grabbed an ice pack from it.

"Seriously?" Billy judged as he raised a brow, his eyes filled with some undecipherable emotion as she grabbed a clean rag and wrapped up the ice pack with it.

"Yes. Will you just sit down?" Wren nudged toward the chair that Eric usually sat in, not realizing that she may have disappointed him.

Billy looked toward the side in disbelief, chuckling and rolling his shoulders a bit as his tongue ran across his top layer of teeth.

"Goddammit Billy, just sit down." Wren urged impatiently, causing the boy to laugh quietly and to raise his hands up in defense.

Even if she did know, she wouldn't have cared.

"Sheesh, I heard ya the first time.." He trailed not so seriously, tossing his wet trunks onto the desk without a care and plopping down into the padded seat.

Wren had pulled over one of the metal fold-out chairs but didn't get down as she took a few steps closer to him and brought the chill pack to his cheek very carefully.

"Let me know if the pressure is too much." She muttered, eyes focused on the bruise.

It had gotten worse since she last saw it earlier in the day; it was a darker purple now and the brown had also spread out more and yellow spots were fading out from the injury.

Billy's eyes focused carefully on her as she approached him and willed herself closer to him as willingly as she ever had before.

For once she wasn't bashful about their close proximity and he bit back any teasing remarks that were dying to slip from him for her sake.

His body tensed a bit whenever the rag pushed gently against his skin, but it wasn't anything that bothered him too bad.

"Billy.. what happened last night?" The girl asked softly, the only sound in the room other than their conversation being the white noise from the overhead light buzzing above their heads.

In the moment, he couldn't really focus on what she had asked him at first.

His eyes were just running along her features. She had a natural flush on her face from the sun, a blush running along her cheeks and nose. He hadn't really noticed yet, but she also had some freckles sported on her face. Mostly on her nose.

Her touches were gentle and very careful, something he wasn't really used to even from the girls that he fucked.

"What happened when you went home..?" Wren added on to her question when he didn't answer after a few seconds. He blinked a couple of times and his eyes narrowed toward the side.

"Who's to say this is from home?"

"Billy.. really?" Wren sighed, the look of concern on her face turning into a frown. "You wouldn't be trying to hide it if it was from a fight. C'mon. Don't be so secretive about it."

Her words struck him the wrong way and the tension in his muscles only grew.

"Secretive? I didn't come in here to get investigated by you." He snapped and he acknowledged the coolness of the rag pressing into his warm skin. "And would you fuckin' quit?" Billy hissed angrily, pushing her hand away from his face enough to throw her off guard.

"Stop acting like you know me now just because I told you some shit about me. Why do you think I keep that to myself? It's because of annoying ass people like you that like to pry into my personal life so you can hold it above me." The boy ranted, his demeanor suddenly changing from on-guard to typical showboat Billy.

The girl chewed lightly on the inside of her cheek and folded her arms across her chest, peering down at him and raising her brows as he rambled on. When he stopped, she lifted the rag and ice pack up

again and hitched more of her weight onto her right foot.

"Are you done letting your anger out or do you have anything else to say?" Wren retaliated calmly, her demeanor unchanging.

Billy eyed her for a few moments in slight surprise from her chilled-out composure.

His words didn't seem to affect her at all this time around, and the more he sat there and realized that she was *letting* him express his anger, the more difficult he found to pent his anger toward her.

"I'm done." He mumbled, sighing as she continued to lightly press the pack into his skin.

"Good. We don't have to talk about it, yanno.. I'm worried about you. You need to talk to somebody if you're getting hurt at home." She said quietly, and he huffed out a bitter breath of disbelief.

"Oh yeah.. never gonna fuckin' happen." He chuckled.

"Why not?" Wren frowned, pausing to look down at him.

"My dad is an abusive shithead. If he finds out that I told anybody about what goes on, he'd probably kill me. And I'm out of high school now.. you really think Hawkins' police is going to give a flying fuck about me? Who d'you think they're gonna believe if I come forward saying that he's been doing stuff like this to me my entire life and he argues against me..?Odds aren't in my favor." He scoffed, pausing his words on a depressing note before he continued.

"I'm better off saving enough money to move out and go back to California." He muttered finally.

Silence fell over them and neither of them moved as they met eyes. His were fiery and hers turned curious.

"So you're going back?" She casually asked, trying her best not to sound upset or any certain kind of way, just inquisitive.

"..I want to. Some day." He admitted.

Neither of them would say it, but there was a certain feeling of disappointment that seemed to linger in the air around them as they talked about it.

"What do you miss about California?" Wren's voice rung absentmindedly. She realized that he had a few scrapes on his face that must've come along from him stumbling or falling from the hits he had taken from his dad.

She had a thoughtful look in her eyes as her eyes traveled along his face to make sure there wasn't anything else she missed.

"Oh, shit.." He chuckled, shrugging a little. "More like what is there that I don't miss?" He remarked, drawing his bottom lip between his teeth for a little while as he thought.

"Okay, be more specific. What did you like the most?" The girl specified, gently pushing his bangs from his forehead and feeling her heart drop when she noticed there was another bruise forming there as well.

Billy was thinking about her question and had his answers ready but he felt her fingers brush against his skin so carefully that it threw him off guard some, and her fingers brushing through his hair felt nice..

"Well.. driving on the coast and going to the beaches whenever I wanted to.. and surfing." He answered, but he continued on as she moved the rag and tended to the other, lighter bruise.

"Fuck, the food was amazing. Burgers in Cali shit on the burgers here.. damn, they shit on any kind of food you can get from here." He reminisced. What he wouldn't fucking do for a burger from home. Wren laughed.

"You sound pretty serious about those burgers." She remarked, causing him to smirk.

"Oh yeah, I am."

"You said you liked to surf. Not sure why but you don't strike me as the type." She giggled, causing his brows to raise.

"It's so exhilarating. Even when I couldn't ride the wave it was still fun as fuck falling into the water. My mom actually-" He trailed but suddenly stopped, words dying out and his eyes flickering toward the side.

She wasn't going to ask him about it but he continued anyways.

"Mom actually taught me how to do it." Billy finished his sentence, his volume dying down.

The two went quiet, Wren's eyes wandering along Billy's expression but he didn't really convey anything obvious to her.

When he snapped out of his thought, his blue eyes focused back onto her own and they held eye contact for several seconds.

She didn't know how to explain what was going through her head and t she felt like her heart skipped several beats within those few moments and that was what finally caused her to speak.

"U-Um.. it.. sounds like fun. I've never been to California,.." Wren smiled at him, lifting her hand from his face and letting his skin cool down some.

She felt like her whole body was so much hotter than what it was supposed to be and that the room *definitely* needed better air conditioning.

"Should consider stopping by one day. Think you'd like it." Billy trailed, straightening up some in the seat and letting his eyes narrow over to the clock. "Gotta head out. Dad is gonna freak if I'm not home by nine.." He sighed as he stood up, filling up the little space that was already between them and gently bumping into Wren.

It caused her to take a quick and bashful step back, her calves awkwardly bumping into the metal chair that she forgot was behind her because she hadn't even used it.

"O-Oh.. yeah, yeah that's a good idea." She admitted, pursing her lips before she offered the ice pack to him. "You'll probably need this."

He had grabbed his things and looked at her whenever she said that,

eyebrows raising as amusement filled his eyes.

"I'm good, doll. Don't even need it but wanted the excuse to be catered to by ya." He sent a playful wink in her direction before he grabbed his keys from his pocket.

"See you soon, yeah?"

"I.. yeah. I'll see you." Wren said quietly before he opened the door and left, walking away and leaving her in the room.

She was kind of happy that he didn't walk her to her car because instead of immediately locking up, she took a moment and sat down in the metal seat to process what just happened.

Wren was starting to see this side of Billy that she suspected all along.. this likable, playful side of him that wasn't always so arrogant and mean.

He opened up to her about himself. He seemed much more human to her now than he had ever seemed before..

There was a person underneath all of the sexual comments and keg king titles, she just hadn't seen much of it until now.

What worried Wren the most was that she wanted to get to know him more and more with each interaction they shared but would getting close to Billy end up biting her in the ass in the end?